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The Aristotelian Elements of Tragedy as Found in Homer

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THE ARISTOTELIAN ELEMENTS OF TRAGEDY AS FOUND IN HOMER

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INTRODUCTION

There was a time in ancient Greece when men claimed that if you knew Homer's poems, you were all-wise. The rhapsodes who performed at the great festivals, reciting the Iliad and the Odyssey, were famous for making assertions of this sort. Probably it was just such talk that induced Plato to write the Ion, an amusing satire on the rhapsodes of fifth century Athens. Plato's Ion boasts that since he knows the rhapsode's art, and can recite his beloved Homer, he knows everything else.[1] Homer speaks of war and strategy; Ion is therefore the best general in all Greece. Xenophanes, a severe critic of Homer, agreed with Ion, when he wrote: ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ' Ὅμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες.[2] This was the peak to which admiration for Homer reached in the fifth century.

Although Homer had not been without his "scourges", yet he certainly had his admirers who attributed to him all wisdom. They even called him the Schoolmaster of Hellas,[3] since his poems were used in the schools to teach the youth to be upright and virtuous citizens. Not content with the bestowal of this title, they conferred another - the First Tragedian.

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1 Ion, 539D ff.
2 Plato, Hipparchus, 228B; Republic, 606E; Isocrates, Panegyricus, 159.
3 frag. 10 (H. Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Fuenfte Auflage herausgegeben von W. Kranz, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1934, I, 131.)

Tragedians were plentiful in the Athens of those days - and good too. But none came before Homer, either in time or eminence.

Certainly to anyone who is at all familiar with the stories of the Iliad and the Odyssey the reason for such an honor is quite apparent. Aristotle thought so, and constantly made comparisons between Homer and the tragedians. Moreover, the people of ancient Greece, who had a very precise understanding of what they meant by "the tragic", and who possessed such remarkable examples of tragedy, penned by the brilliant genius of their three renowned tragedians - examples such as even we in this twentieth century can enjoy quite fully - looked upon the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey as the Father of the Tragedians.

What was the reason for such an opinion? Obviously they felt that these poems contained the same rich tragic elements which touched their hearts and thrilled their souls as they sat in the theatre of Dionysus, listening to a masterpiece wrought by Aeschylus or Sophocles, the prophecy of Cassandra or the rash, bold persistence of Oedipus. As the words of Homer's poetry fell from the lips of clear-voiced rhapsodes, they recognized that Homer, too, was a tragedian; his poetry, too, possessed those qualities which characterized the great tragedians.

In this thesis we are going to discover just what the ancients meant by the term "first tragedian". The reasons for this title are to be found within the Homeric poems themselves. In our search for these reasons we shall employ Aristotle's concept of tragedy, limiting it to four essential elements, plot, character, thought and emotion. We are using Aristotle's concept of tragedy, because he was a Greek, who sat year after year with many an Athenian throng listening to those famous Greek tragedies. He dwelt with those who knew their tragedy well, and he himself has stated concisely what he experienced by "the tragic". With Aristotle as our guide, we shall investigate the Iliad and the Odyssey to find out whether Homeric tragedy was really the seed out of which blossomed forth the immortal flowers of Athenian tragedy. The ancient authors apparently thought Homer's poetry was the germ of later tragedy. If so, then we should be able to find in the Homeric poems those elements which were later essential to true Greek tragedy. Our investigation will ascertain to what extent Homer used those details which Aristotle many centuries later was to lay down as criteria for good tragedy. In this way we hope to vindicate the name of Homer as the First Tragedian.

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT TESTIMONY OF HOMER'S TRAGIC ABILITY

When reading the Poetics one cannot help but notice how frequently Aristotle quotes and alludes to the poems of Homer, which he constantly uses to exemplify and illustrate his own treatise.[1] If we were to gather together the statements he makes about Homer, the following is the judgment, stated concisely, which he passes on Homer in this work.

> Homer is highly honored for the way in which he conceals matters that are illogical, for the way in which he tells falsehoods, for his unity, his Discoveries, and plots, and for the fact that he is not ignorant of the part the poet himself should fill in his poetry.[2]

There are many passages in the writings of Aristotle which could be cited to substantiate the close relation he saw between tragedy and Homeric epic poetry. For him epic was just another form of the tragic art; perhaps it would be better to say, an earlier form. In the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of the Poetics, where he treats of epic poetry, he constantly refers to what he has already said about tragedy,

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1 W. S. Hinman, in his dissertation, Literary Quotation and Allusion in the Rhetoric, Poetics and Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle (no publ. given, Staten Island, N. Y., 106-117), shows that Aristotle has quoted Homer twenty times, and alluded to him twenty-seven times in the Poetics.

2 ibid., 130.

applying the same elements (except for song and spectacle) to both. In general, that relation between tragic and epic poetry is clearly expressed in the following sentence from the Poetics.

> ὥσπερ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιη-
> της Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εὖ ἀλλὰ
> καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), οὕτως
> καὶ τὰ τῆς κωμῳδίας σχήματα πρῶτος
> ὑπέδειξεν οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δρα-
> ματοποιήσας.[3]

Although in the context Aristotle is speaking more of comedy, it is quite evident that there was not the slightest doubt in his mind that Homer's poetry was an excellent example of dramatic content and action. For him Homer was not only a supreme poet and a superb story-teller, but a dramatist, a tragedian. Moreover, he considered epic and tragic poetry as kindred modes of imitation.[4]

> καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμεῖσθαι
> ἔστιν ὁτὲ μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα †ἢ† ἕτερόν τι γιγνό-
> μενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ, ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ
> μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντα ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐν-
> εργοῦντας τοὺς μιμουμένους.[5]

The full import of the passage just quoted is brought out by Hinman.

> . . .Aristotle means that one may relate a story by simple narration or by dramatization, both of which Homer does. Plato, Rep. 392D-394D, describes Homer in the

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3 Poetics 1448b 34ff. (The text used in this thesis is that of I. Bywater, Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Liber, second edition, Oxford Classical Texts Series, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1938.)
4 cf. Poet. 1447a 13ff.
5 Poet. 1448a 20-24.

> same terms as both narrating and dramatizing. Without this parallel from Plato the passage from Aristotle would be an enigma, as Bywater in his note on this passage of the *Poetics* says, although the context of Aristotle seems clear and Homer's method suggests the solution of the lacuna.[6]

It is not my intention to list here all the passages in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle refers in any way to Homer and his relation to tragedy. These, for the most part, will appear during the course of the discussion. However, a few general remarks of the Stagirite will suffice here to express his opinion on the subject.

After enumerating the various characteristics of epic poetry, and telling us that epic poetry should have as many as tragedy, Aristotle states: οἷς ἅπασιν Ὅμηρος. κέχρηται καὶ πρῶτος καὶ ἱκανῶς.[7] While comparing comedy and tragedy, Aristotle says that Homer *Margites* bears the same relation to comedy that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to Tragedy.[8] This is a peculiar and interesting remark, in as much as it cites the *Odyssey* as a form of tragic composition, although there are some[9] who disagreed with Aristotle.

When Aristotle is discussing the constituent parts of an epic or tragedy, he remarks:

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6 *op. cit.*, 111.
7 *Poet.* 1459b 12.
8 *ibid.*, 1448b 38.
9 cf. "Longinus", *de Sublimitate*, IX. 15, ed. by A. O. Prickard, in *O. C. T.* Series, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1906.

μέρη δ' ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν ταὐτά, τὰ δὲ ἴδια τῆς τραγῳδίας — διόπερ ὅστις περὶ τραγῳδίας οἶδε σπουδαίας καὶ φαύλης, οἶδε καὶ περὶ ἐπῶν. ἃ μὲν γὰρ ἐποποιία ἔχει, ὑπάρχει τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ, ἃ δὲ αὐτῇ, οὐ πάντα ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ.[10]

This thesis, being an attempt to show that the elements of tragedy are found in Homer's epics, will be in full accord with the last phrase of the above citation, because it is clear from the context that Aristotle is referring mainly to song and spectacular staging as the elements which are not found in epic poetry. We have here, however, an explicit statement of Aristotle that the elements of tragedy can be found in epic poetry. This epic poetry we know to be specifically that of Homer.

The few quotations that have been given from the Poetics suffice, I think, to illustrate the close reliance between tragedy and the Homeric poems that Aristotle noticed. During the course of this thesis many other quotations will appear, which will bring out in more detail the reasons for the Philosopher's comparison of these two forms of art.

We know that this notion of tragedy's dependence on Homer was not by any means a new one with Aristotle. He seems to be merely restating it, and giving in a more detailed way what is found in the sayings of various authors before him. Among them was Aeschylus. Athenaeus, writing of him, records:

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10 Poet. 1449b 16-20.

ὁ καλὸς καὶ λαμπρὸς Αἰσχύλος τὰς αὑτοῦ τραγῳδίας τεμάχη εἶναι ἔλεγε τῶν Ὁμήρου μεγάλων δείπνων.[11] This saying is famous and often quoted. Bassett interprets it as follows: ". . .if taken at its face value, [it] should mean that what he added to the embryonic drama of Thespis and his immediate successors was due to the inspiration and pattern of Homer."[12] Athenaeus is contrasting Aeschylus with a certain Ulpian, who took not "slices" of meat, as Aeschylus did, but a bone or a thick piece of gristle. "The <u>pièces</u> <u>de</u> <u>résistance</u> of Homer," says Bassett, "are the dialogues, which Aeschylus, by adding a second actor, introduced into the nascent tragedy."[13]

Plato, too, often speaks of Homer as a tragedian. This philosopher's love and admiration of Homer is known to anyone who has read the <u>Republic</u>, especially the tenth book.[14] It is here that we find him paying tribute to Homer as a tragedian. In one place he tells us:

> Οὐκοῦν, εἶπον, ὦ Γλαύκων, ὅταν Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέ-
> ταις ἐντύχῃς λέγουσιν ὡς τὴν Ἑλλάδα πεπαί-
> δευκεν οὗτος ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ πρὸς διοίκησίν τε
> καὶ παιδείαν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων
> ἄξιος ἀναλαβόντι μανθάνειν τε καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον
> τὸν ποιητὴν πάντα τὸν αὑτοῦ βίον κατασκευ-
> ασάμενον ζῆν, φιλεῖν μὲν χρὴ καὶ ἀσπάζεσθαι
> ὡς ὄντας βελτίστους εἰς ὅσον δύνανται, καὶ

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11 <u>Athenaei</u> <u>Dipnosophistarum</u> <u>Epitome</u>, 347e (edited by S. P. Peppink, E. J. Brill, Lugdini Batavorum, 1937, II, part I, 164.

12 <u>The</u> <u>Poetry</u> <u>of</u> <u>Homer</u>, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1938, 60.

13 <u>ibid</u>., 61.

14 cf. 595B, edited by J. Burnet, in <u>O</u>. <u>C</u>. <u>T</u>. Series, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1937.

συγχωρεῖν Ὅμηρον ποιητικώτατον εἶναι καὶ πρῶτον τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν....[15]

In the midst of such a passage, which at once censures the use of the Homeric poems as educational instruments, and yet praises the genius of their author, Plato pays to Homer one of the most beautiful tributes he ever received from ancient writers.

The underlying reason for Plato's criticism and banishment of epic poetry and tragedy from his city-state is his theory of art and his interpretation of "imitation", which, he claims, is not real art, but a corruption of the mind of all listeners who do not possess as an antidote a knowledge of the real nature of art.[16] Yet it is precisely on the point of imitation that Plato seems to found his reasons for alleging Homer's connection with tragedy. In his eyes epic poetry is just as much an imitation as is tragedy.[17] Because the Platonic theory of imitation is ultimately founded on the Theory of Ideas, the reasons for such a view of poetry become more intelligible to us. Imitative poetry is but a picture of a picture; it is far from truth, shadowy and not the real thing. But the philosopher in Plato was seeking out that which is truth. τοῦτ' ἄρα ἔσται καὶ ὁ τραγῳδοποιός, εἴπερ μιμητής ἐστι, τρίτος τις ἀπὸ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας πεφυκώς, καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄλλοι μιμηταί.[18]

15 Rep. 606E-607A
16 Ibid., 595B.
17 Ibid., 393B.
18 Ibid., 597E.

In another place Plato explains himself a little more clearly, pointing out in what way both epic and tragic poetry share in the imitative art. In such poetry the imitator knows nothing worth mentioning of the things he imitates; imitation is but a form of play and not to be taken seriously.[19] οὐκοῦν τιθῶμεν ἀπὸ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένους πάντας τοὺς ποιητικοὺς μιμητὰς εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς εἶναι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων περὶ ὧν ποιοῦσιν, τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας οὐχ ἅπτεσθαι.[20] Such a form of poetry could have no place in his polity, because it would be foreign to its whole spirit. Keeping this in mind when we read some of his other statements about imitative poetry, we can appreciate his view, which constrained him to censure the bard of Chios. Yet confesses that from boyhood he has always had love and reverence for Homer. ἔοικε μὲν γὰρ τῶν καλῶν ἁπάντων τούτων τῶν τραγικῶν πρῶτος διδάσκαλός τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν γενέσθαι.[21] A more explicit statement than this from Plato we could not really hope for -- his love and reverence for Homer, and the bestowal of the epithet of teacher and beginner of tragedy.

But Plato is so wrapped up in his idea of imitation that he is forced to condemn even the critics of epic and tragic poetry. And while doing so, he once again makes mention of Homer's connection with the art of tragedy; this time he is its leader.

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19 ibid., 602B.
20 *ibid.*, 600E.
21 *ibid.*, 595C.

Οὐκοῦν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπισκεπτέον τήν τε τραγῳδίαν καὶ τὸν ἡγεμόνα αὐτῆς Ὅμηρον, ἐπειδή τινων ἀκούομεν ὅτι οὗτοι πάσας μὲν τέχνας ἐπίστανται, πάντα δὲ ἀνθρώπεια τὰ πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν, καὶ τά γε θεῖα.[22]

But it is not only on the score of imitation that Plato mentions Homer in connection with tragedy. By the use of that imitative art in epic poetry Homer aroused emotions which were kindred to those of tragedy.

οἱ γάρ που βέλτιστος ἡμῶν ἀκροώμενοι Ὁμήρου ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς τῶν τραγῳδοποιῶν μιμουμένου τινὰ τῶν ἡρώων ἐν πένθει ὄντα καὶ μακρὰν ῥῆσιν ἀποτείνοντα ἐν τοῖς ὀδυρμοῖς ἢ καὶ ᾄδοντάς τε καὶ κοπτομένους, οἶσθ' ὅτι χαίρομέν τε καὶ ἐνδόντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἑπόμεθα συμπάσχοντες καὶ σπουδάζοντες ἐπαινοῦμεν ὡς ἀγαθὸν ποιητήν, ὃς ἂν ἡμᾶς ὅτι μάλιστα οὕτω διαθῇ.[23]

According to Plato such emotions as pity and fear would weaken the moral character of the youth of his city-state. Although he finds fault with Homer for stirring up these tragic emotions, he admits that he himself has often experienced that pleasure when listening to a rhapsode's recitation of Homer. Plato recognized Homer as a master in this art, and consequently could not help praising him, even though he had to condemn him practically in the same sentence. However, he tells us that he is willing to give poetry a chance to defend itself, and once again he is witness to Homer's magical powers over the emotions. Plato makes Socrates ask Glaucon, ἦ γάρ, ὦ φίλε, οὐ κηλῇ ὑπ' αὐτῆς καὶ σύ, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν δι' Ὁμήρου θεωρῇς

22 <u>ibid</u>., 598D-E
23 <u>ibid</u>., 605C-D.

αὐτήν.[24]

In the Theaetetus, while discoursing on the unity and invariability of 'nothing', Socrates refers to Homer as a tragedian. This reference is, in fact, rather interesting, seeing that he cites Homer alone as an example of tragedy. And it is stranger still, since there is no reason apparent from the context why he should bring drama in at all, since a philosophical question is being discussed.

> καὶ περὶ τούτου πάντες ἑξῆς οἱ σοφοὶ πλὴν Παρμενίδου συμφερέσθων, Πρωταγόρας τε καὶ Ἡράκλειτος καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ἄκροι τῆς ποιήσεως ἑκατέρας, κωμῳδίας μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος, τραγῳδίας δὲ Ὅμηρος....[25]

The foregoing citations from Plato's writings list for us a few of the reasons why he called Homer a tragedian. But he was not the only one in ancient Greece to notice the ability of the bard of Chios as a tragedian before the time of Aristotle. Isocrates, too, links him with the inventors of tragedy, and thereby shows that he conceived the technique of both arts to be closely related. διὸ καὶ τὴν Ὁμήρου ποίησιν καὶ τοὺς πρώτους εὑρόντας τραγῳδίαν ἄξιον θαυμάζειν, ὅτι κατιδόντες τὴν φύσιν τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀμφοτέραις ταῖς ἰδέαις ταύταις κατεχρήσαντο πρὸς τὴν ποίησιν.[26] It seems that Isocrates conceived the psycho-

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24 ibid., 607D.

25 Theaet. 152E, ed. by J. Burnet, in O. C. T., Clarendon Press Oxford, 1899, I.

26 Ad Nicoclem, 48, ed by G. Norlin, in Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1928, I, 66.

logical element in both epic and tragedy as practically the same. He mentions this as part of the advice that he is giving to young Nicocles on the art of writing anything in verse or prose. He counsels him to seek out those details which will make a popular appeal and arouse the proper emotions. For this purpose Isocrates singles out Homer and the tragic poets as models, not, indeed, as distinct models of different forms, but as models of the one effective method.

There are also a few other authors in ancient Greece, whose testimonies will add some weight to the opinions already brought forward. Diogenes Laertius, in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tells of a certain Polemo, the son of Philostratus, and head of the Academy from 314 B. C. to *c.* 276 B. C., who had a deep love for Sophocles. Concerning him Diogenes records: ἔλεγεν οὖν τὸν μὲν Ὅμηρον ἐπικὸν εἶναι Σοφοκλέα, τὸν δὲ Σοφοκλέα Ὅμηρον τραγικόν.[27] However, Diogenes does not mention the meaning Polemo intended by this statement, nor the reasons which prompted him to say it. But we will not be far wrong in thinking that he noticed a decided resemblance between the two authors. This remark of Polemo recalls what Aristotle in his *Poetics* also has to say about Homer and Sophocles. According to him, Sophocles is an imitator of the same sort as Homer - for both imitate higher types of character.[28] It is quite

27 IV, 20, ed. by R. D. Hicks in *Loeb Classical Library*, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1925, I, 396.

28 1448a 25.

probable, however, that Polemo did not mean exactly the same thing by his statement that Aristotle did.

Among the ancients,[29] then, it seems to have been quite generally admitted that Homer's poems were tragic in nature and contained the seeds of the later art, which was to blossom forth during the Golden Age of Athenian History.[30] While Plato called

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29 Nor were the Scholiasts and others slow to reecho the opinion of their forerunners. Porphyrion, Schol. ad Il. I, 332: πρῶτος πρόσωπα κωφὰ παρήγαγεν εἰς τὴν τραγῳδίαν; ad III, 306: ἅμα τῷ ποιητῇ ἡ τραγῳδία ἀνύεται; ad VI, 468: πρῶτος παῖδας ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ εἰσάγει. - Ps.-Plut., de vita Hom., 213: ἡ τραγῳδία τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔλαβεν ἐξ Ὁμήρου. - Philostratus, Vita Apollonii, 229K: Ἀθηναῖοι πατέρα μὲν αὐτὸν (sc. Ὅμηρον) τῆς τραγῳδίας ἡγοῦντο. - Eustathius, ad Il. XIX, 488, calls the Odyssey a drama, and ad Il. XXII, 431, a tragedy. - Tzetzes, 95 (Kaib.): Ὅμηρός ἐστι καὶ πατὴρ κωμῳδίας καὶ σατυρικῆς ἅμα καὶ τραγῳδίας. (These are all cited in A. Gudeman, Aristoteles Poetik, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1934, 109.)

30 Cf. the interesting relief of the "Apotheosis of Homer", by Archelaus of Priene in the first years of the reign of Tiberius. It can be found in A. Baumeister's Denkmaeler des Klassischen Altertums, Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, Muenchen und Leipzig, 1885, I, 112. Baumeister's description follows: "Homer entgegen bewegt sich von rechts her ein feierlicher Zug, durch Altar und Stier als Opferzug bezeichnet. Vor dem Altarc steht der Mythos mit Kanne und Schale, hinter demselben Historia, Weihrauch auf dem Altar streuend, es folgen Poiesis, Tragodia, und Komodia, ferner Physis als Kind, Arete, Mneme, Pistis, und Sophia. Die Gestalten sind saemtlich mit Inschriften bezeichnet, was auch durchaus noetig war, da der Beschauer bei den meisten wenigstens die Bedeutung ohne Beischrift nicht erkennen wuerde. Der Sinn der ganzen Darstellung des untersten Streifens laesst sich dahin zusammenfassen, dass Homer und seine Werke, so lange es eine Zeit gibt, ueber die bewohnte Erde hin beruehmt sein werden, und dass die Geschichte, als deren Anfang der Mythos zu bezeichnen, ebenso wie alle Arten der Dichtkunst den Altmeister stets dankend verehren werden." This is putting into the concrete the opinion prevalent among the ancients that Homer was the source of all knowledge but the part that interests us most is the fact that here again is another testimony of tragedy's relation to Homer.

Homer a tragedian because his poetry was imitative, and aroused the same emotions, as did tragedy, Aristotle saw in his poetry the elements out of which he knew the later tragedies were composed. Aeschylus, who has been called the Creator of Athenian Tragedy, referred to his own dramas as "slices" from the great banquets of Homer, while Isocrates, the rhetorician, found in the Homeric poems a model similar to the tragedies for arousing effective emotions.

Disparate though their reasons may be, the authors cited in this chapter agree in this that Homer was the first tragedian, and that his poetry contained at least in germine the elements of later tragedy. In the following chapters our task will be to examine the Iliad and Odyssey to discover that seed, to bring to light those tragic elements contained in these poems. By so doing, we hope to show that there is a legitimate foundation for these statements of the ancients, and in particular, for Aristotle's.

CHAPTER II

ARISTOTLE'S NOTION OF TRAGEDY

Tragedy is an elusive creature, a Proteus in its own right. The attempts to grasp its essence, its meaning, its spirit and to "hold it fast", as Odysseus was bidden, seem to have been in many instances rather futile. One literary period after another from the time of the ancient Greeks has been witness to these attempts, and today it is still a matter of dispute among critics. Plato may be listed among the first to express his views on the subject. Aristotle, too, made an attempt, but disagreed with his master. This was the beginning of the battle which has ensued more or less for two thousand years - Classicism vs. Romanticism. But the strange, yet interesting, fact to be noticed is that both of these men, representatives of diverse schools of thought on this question, have looked on Homer as a tragedian. This title, as we have seen, was given to Homer by several writers of ancient times, and the modern critics have often echoed this tribute. We have also seen that the reasons for bestowing this title were diverse. To investigate these reasons further would indeed prove interesting, but would lead us too far afield. We do not intend to discover why Plato differed from Aristotle in his opinion, if he really did, but rather we want to know the fundamental reasons for Aristotle's opinion. Why did the Stagi-

rite see a similarity between the epic poetry of Homer and the tragic poetry of the Athenian Greeks? Our answer, briefly, is merely a restatement of his, namely that the elements of both epic and tragedy are essentially the same.

We referred to tragedy above as elusive. How immediately pertinent this reference is will become evident in the reading of this chapter. A casual glance at Aristotle's definition of tragedy will give one the impression that he had a very precise idea of what he meant by "the tragic". But immediately the question arises in the mind of one who is conversant with the extant Greek plays, whether Aristotle can be right or not. Are the six elements enumerated by him all that there is to Greek tragedy? He seems to leave out an important factor or factors, and he has been criticized severely for it. Perhaps the cavilling would be deserved if Aristotle intended to set forth in the _Poetics_ all of the elements which constitute the very essence of tragedy. I do not think that he meant the elements which he enumerates to be such, and my reason is based on the fact that the second part of the work, wherein he promised to treat of allied elements, is now lost.[1] Accordingly, to say that the _Poetics_, as we have them today, contains the _complete_ Aristotelian notion of tragedy is to be unfair to the Philosopher.

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1 However A. P. McMahon, ("On the Second Book of Aristotle's _Poetics_ and the source of Theophrastus' Definition of Tragedy," _Harvard Studies in Classical Philology_, XXVIII (1917), 1-46), claims the second book's existence cannot be absolutely disproved, but it is unlikely.

But to what extent can we follow Aristotle's theory, from what we know of it in the Poetics? This question is not easy to answer. Living at Athens, Aristotle not only attended the festivals of Dionysus, where he saw the tragedies actually produced, but he was also fully conversant with the writings of the Greek tragedians.[2] Because of this first-hand acquaintance I think that we may look upon the extant part of the Poetics as an explanation of some of the essential elements which Greek tragedy, as he knew it, certainly contained.

We would certainly do wrong to look upon the Poetics as a treatise on aesthetics. It is, at best, a set of empirical rules. Aristotle did not aim at proposing aesthetic laws which would prove universally rigid for all times. This would have been to attempt the impossible; for he dealt, says Professor J. W. H. Atkins,

> with Greek Literature alone, with a literature, that is, that had not as yet completed all its phases of development. It is, moreover significant that Aristotle's attitude throughout is retrospective in kind; he is merely seeking the laws in the facts that lie before him, and he makes no pronouncements as to the literature of the future.[3]

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2 Hinman, passim, has shown that in the Rhetoric, Poetics and Nicomachean Ethics alone Aristotle either quotes or alludes to Euripides 55 times, Sophocles 36 times, Aeschylus 11 times; of these in the Poetics alone he alludes to Euripides 20 times; to Sophocles 23 times; to Aeschylus 6 times. I am omitting the quotations from, and the allusions to, minor tragedians, since these are only offered as an example of his conversance.

3 Literary Criticism in Antiquity, at the University Press, Cambridge, 1934, I, 79.

The *Poetics* is not a compendium of *a priori* conclusions. When we realize that Aristotle's method was inductive, and the principles at which he arrived were derived from the actual practice of the tragic masters of the two hundred years before him, we can see how unfortunate it is that the critics of the Renaissance took the philosophical attitude towards this work, as if Aristotle had expressed in his definition the perfection of the very essence of tragedy.

But even granting that at most they are merely empirical rules, can they still be applied to extant Greek tragedy? In some cases they can with little difficulty; in others it is much more difficult; and in some it seems almost impossible. It is not my purpose to illustrate this statement here. We need only remember that we do not have extant all the plays which Aristotle knew, and from which he drew these elements.

If, then, we look on the *Poetics* in this way, and remember that Aristotle was not excluding from tragedy anything else (e.g. inspiration, the religious element, etc.), I think that we can speak of the Aristotelian notion of tragedy. In applying such a theory to Homeric poetry, we shall not be denying anything to Homer. We are simply employing these particular Aristotelian criteria for good tragedy, w hile prescinding from, but not denying any other.

To proceed, then, to the Aristotelian notion of tragedy, we

ask, "What are its elements?" In spite of the difficulties to be encountered in attempting to answer this question, it seems necessary to sketch in a few words Aristotle's notion of tragedy, if we are to show that the elements of tragedy, as he conceived it, are to be found in Homer's poetry. Such a sketch will serve as a general background to the problem and as a sign-post to guide us in our search for the tragic elements in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

In the sixth chapter of the Poetics Aristotle gives his definition of tragedy, which has become in the course of time both familiar and famous.

> ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας
> καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ
> χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις,
> δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας, δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ
> φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημά-
> των κάθαρσιν.[4]

In this definition Aristotle proposes "imitation" as the genus. That he conceived it as such is evident from the first chapter of the Poetics,[5] where he tells us that epic, tragic, comic and dithyrambic poetry, the music of the flute and lyre are all forms of imitation. This he undoubtedly learned from Plato, but into this word "imitation" he has read a new and different signification. ἡ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν[6] or μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι

4 Poet. 1449b 24-28.
5 Ibid., 1447a 13-16.
6 Phys., 194a 22; cf. also 199a 13, ed. by P. H. Wicksteed and F. M. Cornford, in Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1929, I, 120.

πράττοντας.[7] Obviously these are quite different from Plato's idea of imitation or art. Human actions, thoughts, emotions, feelings are all the objects of imitation for tragedy, according to Aristotle. Tragedy, too, has its own distinctive way of imitating, which we learn is by means of action. Herein, it seems, lies the specific difference of drama in general; it is an imitation of action, in the form of action, not of narrative.[8]

The action in tragedy must be serious. By this Aristotle wishes to indicate how tragedy differs from comedy. Though the meaning of the adjective σπουδαῖος in Aristotle's definition has been variously given as "serious", "earnest", "noble", all of these notions really enter into it, since the play must be such that it will command the respect of the audience. Moreover, we are told that the action must be complete. The explanation of this precept, which Aristotle sets down later on in the Poetics, has always proved amusing to the reader. For he tells us that a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle and an end.[9] Though we may wonder whether Aristotle had his tongue in his cheek when he wrote these lines, since the explanation seems to be a mere platitude, its pertinence is fully, yet succinctly, explained by F. L. Lucas in the following words.

> All that Aristotle is insisting upon is that a play should have good and obvious

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7 Poet. 1448a 1.
8 Ibid., 1448a 28.
9 Ibid., 1450b 38.

> reasons for beginning where it begins and ending where it ends; and that its incidents should follow from one another by a clear chain of causation, without coincidence and without irrelevance.[10]

Aristotle also remarks that the action must be of a certain magnitude, since beauty depends on magnitude and order.[11] But he is careful to state precisely just what he means by this quality. He compares the plot to a living organism, in which a definite magnitude proper to it is always had. So too with the plot, which must have a definite length, but one that can still be embraced by the memory.[12]

The phrase, "in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play," is understood to refer to drama alone. For the qualities mentioned before this might just as easily be applied to other types of the poetic art as well. Embellished language refers undoubtedly to the song and diction of a Greek drama, perhaps also to the staging effects. These three elements are considered necessary for tragedy, since it implies by its nature persons acting.[13] However, the use which tragedy makes of them is quite distinctive, since it intermingles lyrics sung by the chorus with actor dialogues, and employs the type of spectacle proper to the stage. The quality of seriousness which Aristotle

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10 Tragedy - In Relation to Aristotle's Poetics, Hogarth Lectures on Literature, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1930, 75.
11 Poet. 1450b 38.
12 ibid., 1451a 3.
13 ibid., 1449b 31.

mentioned earlier in his definition is to be applied here also, for comedy makes use of these details, though not in the same manner. Besides, it is true that other kinds of poetry may make use of these elements, e. g., the portions of tragedy sung by the chorus are similar to Greek lyric poetry; epic poetry is made up largely of dialogues. But the differentiating characteristic of tragedy in this regard is that it skilfully combines the two.

The Stagirite enuntiates as a principal means of tragedy the use of the emotions of pity and fear, and at the same time he sets forth the purpose of the use of these emotions - δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. The translation and interpretation of this phrase has been discussed at great length by the "masters in Israel". Just what Aristotle really meant by the statement will never be known for certain, since the part of the Poetics, wherein he discussed this question, has been lost. However, if we apply the adage Aristotelem nonnisi ex ipso Aristotele intelliges, we may perhaps have a clue to the understanding of this word from a passage in the Politics.[14] There he tells us:

> ὃ γὰρ περὶ ἐνίας συμβαίνει πάθος ψυχὰς ἰσχυρῶς, τοῦτο ἐν πάσαις ὑπάρχει, τῷ δὲ ἧττον διαφέρει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον, οἷον ἔλεος καὶ φόβος, ἔτι δ' ἐνθουσιασμός. καὶ γὰρ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς

14 1342a 4ff., ed. by F. Susemihl and R. D. Hicks, The Macmillan Co., London, 1894.

> κινήσεως κατακώχιμοί τινες εἰσίν· ἐκ τῶν δ' ἱερῶν μελῶν ὁρῶμεν τούτους, ὅταν χρήσωνται τοῖς ἐξοργιάζουσι τὴν ψυχὴν μέλεσι, καθισταμένους ὥσπερ ἰατρείας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως. ταὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτο ἀναγκαῖον πάσχειν καὶ τοὺς ἐλεήμονας καὶ τοὺς φοβητικοὺς καὶ τοὺς ὅλως παθητικούς, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους καθ' ὅσον ἐπιβάλλει τῶν τοιούτων ἑκάστῳ, καὶ πᾶσι γίγνεσθαί τινα κάθαρσιν καὶ κουφίζεσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῆς. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ μέλη τὰ † καθαρτικὰ † παρέχει χαρὰν ἀβλαβῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

The theory of <u>catharsis</u> has been interpreted in the light of this passage, and we are told that the <u>finis</u> of tragedy is to purge the emotions of pity and fear by giving them an outlet. So Milton explained it.[15] To support such an interpretation extrinsic reasons are adduced, such as the fact that Aristotle's father was a physician, while he himself was a biologist. And so it would be quite natural for Aristotle to use the theory of <u>catharsis</u> in the medicinal sense.

However, it has not always been interpreted in this manner. A suggestion has been made that the word has a further meaning. "It expresses not only a fact of psychology or pathology, but a principle of art. The original metaphor is in itself a guide to the full aesthetic significance of the term."[16] In this connection we should notice that the verb καθαίρειν in the previous interpretation has for its object the person or thing to be cleansed or purified. But there occur examples,[17] both in a

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15 cf. <u>Preface to Samson Agonistes</u>.
16 S. H. Butcher, <u>Some Aspects of the Greek Genius</u>, Macmillan and Co., London, 1891, 358.
17 cf. Plato, <u>Phaedo</u> 67C, 69B; <u>Sophist</u> 230D, 231E.

technical and metaphorical usage, where the object of καθαίρειν is the impurity itself, and not the person or thing. "With this construction the verb means not merely to purge (the system) but to purge away (what is noxious)."[18] Such an interpretation of the word κάθαρσις can be used in Aristotle's definition of tragedy; and, it seems, with more exactitude, for the Greek text reads περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν, seeming to indicate that τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων is an objective genitive. Accordingly, the catharsis of pity and fear will mean the removal of such harrowing details from these emotions as will render them noble and aesthetic. Pity and fear, such as we experience in real life, are depressing emotions. Aristotle tells us that they are λύπη τις.[19] As these are often quite intense in real life, we feel an emotion that is rather of a base, common sort. On the other hand, when attending a tragic performance, we also experience emotions of pity and fear - but they hardly seem the same. The difference lies in this that they become like "altruistic" emotions. The reference to the ego, which is essential to an emotion, is, as it were, transferred to another person, because of the identification of ourselves with the tragic characters. At the same time these emotions lose some of their depressing elements due to the way in which the poet handles his tragic plot. Poetic justice, for instance, helps to purge away these details, enabling fear and pity to become fit emotions

18 F. Susemihl and R. D. Hicks, The Politics of Aristotle, 647.
19 Rhet. 2. 5, 1 (1382a); 2. 8, 2 (1385b).

for art and literature, i. e., noble emotions.

Besides his definition of tragedy Aristotle enumerates six qualities or elements which are found in every good tragedy, perhaps it would be better to say in the most perfect tragedy. They are plot, character, thought, diction, song and spectacle, and are only an explicit statement of what is contained in his definition. According to these he divides his treatment. He considers plot as the first and most important element in tragedy,[20] while unity is the chief prerequisite of every good plot. This unity of plot is the one "unity" that Aristotle treats of explicitly at any length in the <u>Poetics</u>. The way he describes the various kinds of plots is well known.[21] A plot is simple, if the action is one and continuous, and if the change of fortune takes place without peripety and anagnorisis. A complex plot, on the other hand, is built around a peripety or anagnorisis. Again, if suffering is conspicuous in the story, the plot is παθητική, whereas it is ἠθική if character is the predominating note. Moreover, Aristotle conceives the change in the protagonist's fortunes as the main part of the tragedy. This should not be the story of a virtuous man who is brought from prosperity to adversity, nor of a villain who profits by his wickedness. Such tales are not tragic. Neither is the downfall of the utter villain; this might satisfy our sense of poetic justice, but really it is not tragic. The ideal tragic plot exhibits the misfortunes

20 Poet. 1450a 15.
21 <u>ibid</u>., 1455b 33.

of a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἁμαρτίαν τινὰ τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ.[22] In such a plot Aristotle says the emotions of pity and fear will arise spontaneously. Their effect is best had by letting them work on the audience indirectly through the action of the plot, and not by any direct means.

In the above exposition we have met some of Aristotle's ideas on character-portrayal, the second of the two most important tragic elements. In the ideal tragic character four qualities are to be found; he must be good, true to type, true to tradition, consistent. In all of these characteristics, however, allowance is to be made for the laws of necessity and probability which are to guide the poet in his portrayal. The tragic personage is to be above the common level, but the distinctive form of the original personage is to be retained. Many of Aristotle's remarks on tragic characters are of great value, especially his dictum that the hero should be a good person who has some fault or makes some error in judgment, which is responsible for the change of fortunes that takes place in his life. This is the famous doctrine of the *hamartia*.

"Thought", the third element, is to be understood as that

22 *ibid.*, 1453a 7f.

quality which expresses the intellectual side of a man's character. It is found, says Aristotle, in those passages where the actors propose an argument or deliver an opinion. Since such a notion pertains rather to rhetoric, it is not treated at length in the Poetics, although it does have its place in tragedy, because of itself it can arouse the emotions of pity and fear. Then, too, the greater part of tragedy is represented through the medium of dialogue, which should be guided by the rules of Rhetoric.

Diction treats of the modes of expression. Song and spectacle, or staging effects, are part of the external embellishments of tragedy, as was noted above, and are largely taken care of by the action of the chorus.

From this it can be seen that of the six elements mentioned by Aristotle, diction, song and spectacle are more or less extrinsic accompaniments, and not really distinctive parts of tragedy itself. The other three, however, plot, character and "thought", and in particular the first two, are quite essential. When a consideration of the emotions is added to these, we have the main elements of ancient Greek tragedy according to Aristotle's conception of it.

We have but mentioned the elements of Aristotelian tragedy at this point. They need further explanation in many cases, that they may be more fully understood. As we discuss them one

by one in this thesis, and apply them to Homer's poetry, we shall introduce some of Aristotle's own elaborations to make his position clear.

This concept of tragedy can be found in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, at least according to its more important elements. Aristotle himself did not say that all of them could be found in these poems; in fact, he explicitly excluded a few: καὶ τὰ μέρη ἔξω μελοποιίας καὶ ὄψεως ταὐτά .[23]

> The epic is said to lack Spectacle, but this is an inconsequential accessory of tragedy and should not be a real concern of the poet. The rhapsodists in fact have certain accessories that bring a slight approximation. Melody was probably original in Homeric poems and was later discarded, whereas it forms only a pleasurable accessory, albeit a great one, in tragedy. It does not constitute a fundamental element, for, when the play is read, that is without Spectacle or Melody, the tragic effect is also felt.[24]

We have eliminated diction also, since it does not pertain to tragedy in the same way as do plot, character and "thought", nor would anything substantial be lost from Aristotle's concept of tragedy by the omission of it.[25] It is with plot, character, "thought" and emotion, then, that we are going to deal in the following chapters.

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23 ibid., 1459b 9; cf. also 1449b 31ff., where ὄψις, μελοποιία and λέξις are given as the means that are proper and exclusive to tragedy, as it is acted.

24 G. R. Throop, "Epic and Dramatic", Washington University Studies, V (1917), Humanistic Series, 4-5.

25 This is not wholly alien to the mind of Aristotle, since he says with regard to diction: διὸ παρείσθω ὡς ἄλλης καὶ οὐ τῆς ποιητικῆς ὂν θεώρημα (Poet. 1456b 18).

CHAPTER III

TREATMENT OF PLOT

In the previous chapter a brief but adequate summary of Aristotle's concept of tragedy was given. In this and the succeeding chapters we begin to discuss those elements which we have seen to be essential to that concept of tragedy. Plot, which Aristotle considered the most important for tragedy,[1] is the first to occupy our attention.

Since plot plays so important a part in the Stagirite's notion of tragedy, the prescriptions and rules he gives for it are quite numerous. Tragedy is not a mere representation of men, but of an action;[2] the end aimed at being the representation of an action.[3] This is why Aristotle said that you cannot have a tragedy without action.[4] Since so much depends on this idea of action, he defines plot as the arrangement of the incidents.[5] The plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of tragedy.[6] The tragic poet must be a <u>maker</u> of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his representations, and what he represents is action.[7]

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1 Poet. 1450a 15.
2 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1449b 36.
3 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1450a 15.
4 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1450a 23.
5 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1450a 4.
6 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1450a 38.
7 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1451b 27.

Since the manner in which the incidents are arranged determine the kind of plot,[8] Aristotle distinguished four kinds of plot: plots of suffering and of character, simple and complex plots.[9] The former differ in so far as suffering or character-portrayal predominate in the action. Simple plots are those which are single and continuous, wherein the change of fortune takes place without περιπέτεια or ἀναγνώρισις; whereas the complex plot is had when the change coincides with a discovery or reversal, which are to be governed by the rule _propter hoc et non post hoc_.[10] Rules of thought are also to govern the arrangement of incidents.[11] The construction of the best tragedy should not be simple but complex.[12]

The two most important elements in the emotional effect of tragedy are parts of the plot, namely reversals and discoveries.[13] We are told that a reversal is a change of situation to the opposite, which takes place with probability or inevitability.[14] Aristotle gives the example of the shepherd in the _Oedipus Tyrannus_ of Sophocles, who comes to cheer Oedipus and relieve him of his fears, but actually produces the opposite effect by his information. Discovery, on the other hand, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing either friendship or hatred in those

8 ibid., 1455b 32.
9 _ibid._, 33.
10 _ibid._, 1452a 12.
11 _ibid._, 1456b 2.
12 _ibid._, 1452b 30.
13 _ibid._, 1450a 33.
14 _ibid._, 1452a 22.

who are destined for good fortune or ill. The most effective discovery coincides with a reversal; and this is the kind that is most essentially part of the plot and action.[15] In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a result of the shepherd's information the king recognizes himself as the slayer of Laius, and that he has married his own mother. The types of anagnorisis are five: by means of tokens, by manufactured discoveries, by memory, by reasoning, by the complication of the incidents themselves.[16] The best is the last mentioned and the second best is that from reasoning.[17] The third element of plot that contributes to the emotional effect of tragedy is calamity (πάθος) which Aristotle defines as a destructive or painful occurrence, such as death, acute suffering or wounding.[18]

Closely allied with these types of tragedy is the question of the turn of fortunes. The most successful plot, we learn, is that which shall have a single,[19] not a double outcome, i. e., where one party has a happy ending, and the other a sad ending.[20] However, the double outcome is the next best arrangement.[21] Moreover, the change that takes place during the course of the tragedy

15 *ibid.*, 1452a 29.
16 *ibid.*, 1454b 20.
17 *ibid.*, 1455a 16.
18 *ibid.*, 1452b 10.
19 "ἁπλοῦς elsewhere in the *Poetics* means 'simple' as opposed to πεπλεγμένος, 'complex'; here it is opposed to διπλοῦς, which describes a double denouement, involving happiness for some and disaster for others." (W. H. Fyfe, *Aristotle, The Poetics* in the *Loeb Classical Library*, London, W. Heinemann, Ltd., 1927, 46)
20 *Poet.* 1453a 12.
21 *ibid.*, 30.

must be from good to bad fortune;[22] this is the best form.[23] For worthy men should not pass from good to bad fortune in a tragedy, nor wicked from bad to good, nor villain from good to bad, but a good character with a hamartia should pass from good fortune to bad.[24] Wherefore every tragedy should contain a complication and a denouement; the incidents outside the plot and some of those in it form the complication, and the rest is the denouement.[25] Moreover, the denouement should be a result of the plot, and not a *deus ex machina*.[26] Nothing indeed should be inexplicable in the plot of the play itself.[27]

But all these elements and characteristics of the plot must be so connected and interrelated as to form an integral whole. In order that the plot may have unity, which it must have,[28] it must have a beginning, a middle and an end;[29] the causal connections between the parts being necessary for pity and fear.[30] Hence the fact that there is one hero does not constitute unity of plot.[31] Episodes, if used, must be integral parts of the whole, since mere episodic parts, which are written for the sake of the audience, are to be eschewed.[32] Besides unity, the plot

22 ibid., 1453a 15.
23 *ibid.*, 22.
24 *ibid.*, 1452b 34.
25 *ibid.*, 1455b 24.
26 *ibid.*, 1454a 37.
27 *ibid.*, 1454b 6.
28 *ibid.*, 1449b 24; 1451a 1.
29 *ibid.*, 1450b 26.
30 *ibid.*, 1452a 1.
31 *ibid.*, 1451a 16.
32 *ibid.*, 1451a 30; 1451b 33.

should have a magnitude which permits the proper change of fortunes with probability,[33] and at the same time it must remain εὐσύνοπτον.[34]

Such are Aristotle's prescriptions for the construction of a plot. Since he refers to Homer as a tragedian, we should be able to discover in his poetry some of the characteristics of an Aristotelian plot. Certainly we shall not be able to verify every little detail, but we should be able to find enough to show that Aristotle had some grounds for calling Homer a tragedian.

These characteristics, which may appear disparate and unconnected, may be gathered under a few general headings: a) kinds of plot; b) elements of plot that contribute to emotional effects in tragedy; c) the change of fortune; d) complication and denouement; e) unity. According to these headings we shall examine the poems of Homer.

Can the Aristotelian types of plot be found in the Iliad and the Odyssey? The burden has not been left to us to decide whether or not the Iliad and Odyssey are capable of being placed into the categories of Aristotelian plots, because the Stagirite himself illustrated his theory by these very poems. He tells us: καὶ γὰρ καὶ τῶν ποιημάτων ἑκάτερον συνέστηκεν ἡ μὲν Ἰλιὰς ἁπλοῦν καὶ παθητικόν, ἡ δὲ Ὀδύσσεια πεπλεγμένον (ἀναγνώρισις γὰρ

33 ibid., 1451a 1.
34 ibid., 1451a 3.

διόλου) καὶ ἠθική.[35] Although Aristotle frequently singles out one perfection to the exclusion of all others in the discussion of a particular poem, he does not necessarily deny that there are others. This is undoubtedly the case here, where there is question of the kinds of plots. In the <u>Iliad</u> the element of surprise is so wanting, and the element of suffering so prominent, that the poem merits to be called simple, and a story of suffering; whereas in the <u>Odyssey</u>, the elements of surprise and character are more evident than the suffering, and so the poem is called complex, and a story of character. A simple plot, as we have seen, is described as one that is single and continuous, wherein the change of fortunes takes place without reversal or discovery. Now certainly there are no real discoveries in the main plot of the <u>Iliad</u>. But are there reversals? Aristotle defines a reversal as a change of situation to its opposite, which takes place with probability or inevitability (ἔστι δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολή. . . κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ ἀναγκαῖον).[36] This definition obviously implies more than it states, since if we substitute the bare definition of a reversal into the definition of a simple plot, we are convinced that more is meant. When such a substitution is made, a simple plot would then be defined as one that is single and continuous, wherein the change of fortune takes place without discovery or 'a change of the situation to the opposite' (reversal). What would a change of fortune be, we ask, if not a change

35 <u>ibid.</u>, 1459b 7f.
36 <u>Ibid.</u>, 1452a 22.

of situation to the opposite? This looks like a plain contradiction, unless Aristotle meant more than the mere words seem to convey. Just what he intended has been discussed at length by commentators. To me the only opinion that seems tenable is that of F. L. Lucas. In an illuminating article[37] he discusses the various opinions, and explains the passage thus: the peripety which Aristotle mentions in the eleventh chapter of the Poetics has a logical connection with the hamartia of chapter thirteen, and with his discussion of plot in chapter fourteen; chapter twelve is an obvious interpolation. The peripety takes places because of the hamartia of the tragic character. These two notions, though they pertain to different elements of tragedy, cannot be adequately understood unless their relation to one another and to the whole plot be likewise considered. "The peripeteia is the working out of that irony of Fate which makes life a tragedy of errors, so that we become the authors of our own undoing, like Lear, or like Othello, kill the thing we love."[38] According to this interpretation Lucas paraphrases Poetics 1452a 22 thus:

> A peripeteia occurs when a course of action intended to produce a result x, produces the reverse of x. Thus the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus, and free him from his fear of marrying his mother; but by revealing who Oedipus really is, he produces exactly the opposite result.[39]

37 "The Reverse of Aristotle", C. R. XXXVII (1923), 98-104.
38 ibid.
39 Tragedy - In Relation to Aristotle's Poetics, 92.

It can be seen that the example used by Aristotle is of great importance to the understanding of the definition. Lucas's interpretation, which depends much on that example, makes the definition of a simple plot at least intelligible.

Now Aristotle said that there is no peripety in the *Iliad*. Is this true? Achilles leaves the battle in anger plotting misfortune for his friends. He told them that one day a craving for the son of Peleus would overtake all the Achaeans, and Agamemnon for all his grief would not be able to help them, but would gnaw out his heart in grief and wrath because he had not honored the best of the Achaeans.[40] And when misfortune is actually come upon them, he still remains adamant in his wrath. Odysseus in words of terrible import describes for Achilles the plight of the Greeks; the Trojans and their far-famed allies have set their bivouac hard by the ships of the Greeks, and they will not be stopped until they have set fire to the ships.[41] And Achilles's answer is:

> ἀλλ', Ὀδυσεῦ, σὺν σοί τε καὶ ἄλλοισιν βασιλεῦσι
> φραζέσθω νήεσσιν ἀλεξέμεναι δήϊον πῦρ.
> ἦ μὲν δὴ μάλα πολλὰ πονήσατο νόσφιν ἐμεῖο,
> καὶ δὴ τεῖχος ἔδειμε, καὶ ἤλασε τάφρον ἐπ' αὐτῷ
> εὐρεῖαν μεγάλην, ἐν δὲ σκόλοπας κατέπηξεν·
> ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς δύναται σθένος Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
> ἴσχειν· ὄφρα δ' ἐγὼ μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν πολέμιζον
> οὐκ ἐθέλεσκε μάχην ἀπὸ τείχεος ὀρνύμεν Ἕκτωρ,
> ἀλλ' ὅσον ἐς Σκαιάς τε πύλας καὶ φηγὸν ἵκανεν.[42]

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40 *Il*. 1, 240-244. (The text used in this thesis is that of D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera*, third edition of vol. 1, 2, second of 3, 4, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1938-1939.

41 *ibid*., 9, 232-235.

42 *ibid*., 346-354.

ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς μὲν ἰόντες ἀριστήεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν
ἀγγελίην ἀπόφασθε — τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ γερόντων —
ὄφρ' ἄλλην φράζωνται ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἀμείνω,
ἥ κέ σφιν νῆάς τε σαῷ καὶ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν
νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇς, ἐπεὶ οὔ σφιν ἥδε γ' ἑτοίμη
ἣν νῦν ἐφράσσαντο ἐμεῦ ἀπομηνίσαντος.[43]

So misfortune and calamity, as Achilles had wished, has come upon the Achaeans. This is the course of action which the son of Peleus had intended, and it has come to pass. Now he has them where he wants them, begging on their knees. Yet despite his wrath he succumbs to the pleading of Patroclus, and allows him to lead forth his Myrmidons to do battle against the Trojans, and to relieve the hard-pressed Greeks. But he himself will not fight - not until the battle begins to rage about his own ships.[44] But Patroclus is killed, and then does the misfortune which Achilles planned return like a boomerang upon himself. He has lost his dear friend, because he desired to see the Achaeans in the dire straits to which his anger would reduce them. He cries to his mother: τὸν ἀπώλεσα.[45]

This might seem at first to be a perfect peripety, and then the <u>Iliad</u> could not be said to be a simple plot. But, as we have seen, the course of action should produce, not the intended x, but the opposite of x. Achilles, by staying away from battle in his wrath, brought the Greeks to their knees before him - thus producing x. Later events, however, brought it about that misfortune should come upon him, and produce, not the opposite

43 ibid., 421-426.
44 <u>ibid</u>., 16, 61.
45 <u>ibid</u>., 18, 82.

of x, but a misfortune comparable to it - the death of Patroclus. However, it was not his direct action that did it. In this sense I think that Aristotle was viewing the Iliad, when he said it contained a simple plot. It is not, however, as perfect as he would seem to wish a simple plot to be.

The Odyssey, on the other hand, is cited by Aristotle as an example of a complex plot. The fortunes of Odysseus at the end of the story are the exact opposite of those in the beginning of the story. In the case of the suitors likewise there is a reversal of fortune because of their own malice. Aristotle briefly summarizes the plot of the Odyssey as follows.

> ἀποδημοῦντός τινος ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ παραφυλ-
> άττομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος καὶ μόνου
> ὄντος, ἔτι δὲ τῶν οἴκοι οὕτως ἐχόντων ὥστε
> τὰ χρήματα ὑπὸ μνηστήρων ἀναλίσκεσθαι, καὶ
> τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀφικνεῖται
> χειμασθείς, καὶ ἀναγνωρίσας †τινὰς† αὐτὸς
> ἐπιθέμενος αὐτὸς μὲν ἐσώθη τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς
> διέφθειρε.[46]

From this outline the double reversal for the contending parties is obvious. The Odyssey has a complex plot, but it is also a story with a double outcome, which alters the notions of peripety somewhat, since the hero comes in the end, not to calamity, but to happiness. Aristotle remarked that the complex plot is better for a perfect tragedy, (i. e., one with peripeties and discoveries), but a story with a single outcome is a better tragedy than one with a double outcome. The Odyssey, then, in so

46 Poet. 1455b 17f.

far as it has a complex plot, can be called a perfect tragedy, but in s o far as it has a double outcome is less effective in attaining the tragic <u>finis</u> than the <u>Iliad</u>.[47]

As a parallel to a τραγῳδία παθητική Aristotle cites the <u>Iliad</u>. We need only read the first few lines of the prologue to gather the gist of the entire poem.

> Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
> οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκεν,
> πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
> ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
> οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι . . .[48]

As a parallel to a τραγῳδία ἠθική the <u>Odyssey</u> is cited, since the emphasis in this poem is not so much on suffering and calamity, although these are not lacking, but rather on the development of character. The element of surprise, too, brought about by the frequent discoveries, is more prominent. L. Adam remarks:

> Wunder muss es uns aber mit Recht nehmen, dass der Philosoph zu vergessen scheint, dass auch in der Odyssee der Freiermord zu den drastischen Erscheinungen gerechnet werden muss, ebenso gut wie die mannigfachen Toetungen in der Ilias, obwohl sie sonst in dieser Beziehung zu jenem Werke in einem allerdings schroffen Gegensatze steht und in der That mehr charakterschildernd ist.[49]

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47 This is an interesting point, since it is often said that the <u>Odyssey</u> is a sort of comedy; cf. 'Longinus', <u>De Sublimitate</u>, ix. 15: οἱονεὶ κωμῳδία τίς ἐστιν ἠθολογουμένη. For Aristotle the <u>Odyssey</u> was <u>tragedy</u>; and it is important to remember this. He tells us that the <u>Iliad</u> and <u>Odyssey</u> are to the tragedies, as the <u>Margites</u> is to the comedies (Poet. 1448b 38).

48 Il. 1. 1-5

49 <u>Die Aristotelische Theorie vom Epos nach ihrer Entwicklung bei Griechen und Roemern</u>, Chr. Limbarth, Wiesbaden, 1889, 27.

So much for the kinds of plots. According to Aristotle three things make a good tragic plot, especially as far as the emotional effect is concerned. They are peripety, anagnorisis and calamity (πάθος). When we were discussing the kinds of plots, we had occasion to deal with the Homeric poems as far as peripeties were involved in them. This notion is not found in the main plot of the Iliad, but in that of the Odyssey.

We turn now to the consideration of anagnorisis, which, says Aristotle, is found continually throughout the Odyssey.[50] Let us look at them. In the third book Telemachus reveals himself to Nestor.

Ὦ Νέστορ Νηληϊάδη, μέγα κῦδος Ἀχαιῶν,
εἴρεαι ὁππόθεν εἰμέν· ἐγὼ δέ κέ τοι καταλέξω.
ἡμεῖς ἐξ Ἰθάκης ὑπονηΐου εἰληλούθομεν
πρῆξις δ᾽ ἥδ᾽ ἰδίη, οὐ δήμιος, ἣν ἀγορεύω.
πατρὸς ἐμοῦ κλέος εὐρὺ μετέρχομαι, ἤν που ἀκούσω,
δίου Ὀδυσσῆος ταλασίφρονος, ὅν ποτέ φασι
σὺν σοὶ μαρνάμενον Τρώων πόλιν ἐξαλαπάξαι.[51]

After Telemachus is sent to Sparta by Nestor, he is there recognized by Helen.

οὐ γάρ πώ τινά φημι ἐοικότα ὧδε ἰδέσθαι
οὔτ᾽ ἄνδρ᾽ οὔτε γυναῖκα, σέβας μ᾽ ἔχει εἰσορόωσαν,
ὡς ὅδ᾽ Ὀδυσσῆος μεγαλήτορος υἷι ἔοικε,
Τηλεμάχῳ, τὸν λεῖπε νέον γεγαῶτ᾽ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
κεῖνος ἀνήρ, ὅτ᾽ ἐμεῖο κυνώπιδος εἵνεκ᾽ Ἀχαιοὶ
ἤλθεθ᾽ ὑπὸ Τροίην, πόλεμον θρασὺν ὁρμαίοντες.[52]

50 Poet. 1459b 15. Some of these have been treated by B. Perrin, "Recognition Scenes in Greek Literature," A. J. P. XXX (1909) 371-384, who claims that some of the recognitions in Homer cannot fit Aristotle's types. To the contrary, cf. D. Stuart, "The Function and the Dramatic Value of the Recognition Scene in Greek Tragedy," ibid., XXXIX (1918), 268-290; cf. Throop, 18

51 Od. 3. 79-85.

52 Ibid., 4. 141-146.

In the eighth book whilst the Phaeacians are feasting Odysseus, the bard, Demodocus, sings of the war at Troy; this brings back to Odysseus old memories and he is saddened and weeps. Only Alcinous noticed it, for he was sitting near him. The king, then, bids the bard cease, and asks Odysseus who he is. Whereupon Odysseus begins his tale and finally reveals himself.

> εἰμ' Ὀδυσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
> ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει .[53]

During the course of his story Odysseus tells of the blinding of the Cyclops. After he had done this deed, he revealed himself to Polyphemus.

> Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τίς σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
> ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,
> φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
> υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί' ἔχοντα.[54]

When Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca, and arrives at the hut of the swineherd, he is transformed in appearance by Athena, and makes himself known to his son, Telemachus. ἀλλὰ πατὴρ τεός εἰμι.[55] Previously, of course, Odysseus had recognized Telemachus, when he was greeted by Eumaeus; but we are not told explicitly of any other recognition by Odysseus. As Telemachus approached, the dogs of Eumaeus did not bark but fawned about him, which caused Odysseus to remark to the swineherd that some friend was probably coming.[56]

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53 *ibid.*, 9. 19-20.
54 *ibid.*, 9. 502-505.
55 *ibid*., 16. 188.
56 *ibid.*, 16. 8-10.

When Odysseus goes up to his palace, he sees his dog, Swifty, whom he had left behind when he went to Troy. There follows the sad tale of how the poor old dog recognizes his master, but because he was so feeble, could not come to him. As Odysseus turns away, for he could not go up to the dog without betraying who he was, Swifty lies down and dies.[57]

In the nineteenth book, where the Bath Scene takes place, we meet one of the famous recognition scenes in the story. After the nurse, Eurycleia, has been bidden by Penelope to wash the feet of the stranger, she senses a strong resemblance between this stranger and her master. Then as she begins to wash his feet, Homer tells us that straightway she knew the scar of the wound, which long ago a boar had dealt him with his white tusk, when Odysseus was hunting on Parnassus with the sons of Autolycus.[58] And she said to him,

> ἦ μάλ' Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι, φίλον τέκος· οὐδέ σ' ἐγώ γε
> πρὶν ἔγνων, πρὶν πάντα ἄνακτ' ἐμὸν ἀμφαφάασθαι.[59]

Before slaying the suitors in the megaron, Odysseus takes the swineherd and the neatherd outside, and after testing their fidelity to him, reveals himself. First he simply tells them that he has returned.[60] Then he makes use of the scar again to prove his identity; ὣς εἰπὼν ῥάκεα μεγάλης ἀποέργαθεν οὐλῆς.[61]

57 ibid., 17. 301ff.
58 ibid., 19, 392-394.
59 ibid., 19. 474-475.
60 ibid., 21. 207-208.
61 ibid., 21. 217-221.

After he has released his first arrow and struck Antinous in the throat, he reveals himself, this time to the suitors.

> ὦ κύνες, οὔ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδ' ἱκέσθαι
> δήμου ἄπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον.[62]

Eurymachus, the leader of the suitors, recognizes the man whose substance he and his comrades have been squandering.

Finally we come to the most dramatic recognition of the whole <u>Odyssey</u>, - the meeting of Odysseus and Penelope, this time to know each other. Eurycleia goes to Penelope's bower after the slaying of the suitors to announce the presence of Odysseus. Penelope is incredulous. Eurycleia tries to convince her, and to a certain extent succeeds. But Penelope must still have proof, and when Telemachus rebukes her for not speaking to Odysseus, she answers:

> εἰ δ' ἐτεὸν δὴ
> ἔστ' Ὀδυσεὺς καὶ οἶκον ἱκάνεται, ἦ μάλα νῶϊ
> γνωσόμεθ' ἀλλήλων καὶ λώϊον· ἔστι γὰρ ἡμῖν
> σήμαθ', ἃ δὴ καὶ νῶϊ κεκρυμμένα ἴδμεν ἀπ' ἄλλων.[63]

Making use of a clever ruse to test Odysseus, Penelope tells Eurycleia to make up for him the stout bedstead <u>outside</u> the well-built bridal chamber which he himself made.

> αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ὀχθήσας ἄλοχον προσεφώνεε κεδνὰ ἰδυῖαν·
> "ὦ γύναι, ἦ μάλα τοῦτο ἔπος θυμαλγὲς ἔειπες.
> τίς δέ μοι ἄλλοσε θῆκε λέχος; χαλεπὸν δέ κεν εἴη
> καὶ μάλ' ἐπισταμένῳ, ὅτε μὴ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν

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62 <u>ibid</u>., 22. 35-36.
63 <u>ibid</u>., 23. 107-110.

ῥηϊδίως ἐθέλων θείη ἄλλῃ ἐνὶ χώρῃ.
ἀνδρῶν δ' οὔ κέν τις ζωὸς βροτός, οὐδὲ μάλ' ἡβῶν,
ῥεῖα μετοχλίσσειεν, ἐπεὶ μέγα σῆμα τέτυκται
ἐν λέχει ἀσκητῷ· τὸ δ' ἐγὼ κάμον οὐδέ τις ἄλλος.[64]

Odysseus describes the bedstead to her, and then with a burst of tears she ran to him, put her arms about his neck and kissed him, saying:

νῦν δ', ἐπεὶ ἤδη σήματ' ἀριφραδέα κατέλεξας
εὐνῆς ἡμετέρης, τὴν οὐ βροτὸς ἄλλος ὀπώπει,
ἀλλ' οἶοι σύ τ' ἐγώ τε καὶ ἀμφίπολος μία μούνη,
Ἀκτορίς, ἥν μοι δῶκε πατὴρ ἔτι δεῦρο κιούσῃ,
ἣ νῶϊν εἴρυτο θύρας πυκινοῦ θαλάμοιο,
πείθεις δή μευ θυμόν, ἀπηνέα περ μάλ' ἐόντα.[65]

In the last book Odysseus, after testing his father's hopes, reveals himself to him.[66] When Laertes asks for a sign or proof, Odysseus shows him the scar, and then adds: εἰ δ' ἄγε τοι καὶ δένδρε' ἐϋκτιμένην κατ' ἀλωὴν εἴπω, ἅ μοί ποτ' ἔδωκας.[67] After convincing Laertes that he has at last returned, he accompanies him to the old man's hut, where they are to have dinner. Dolius, a servant of Laertes, who was absent when Odysseus first arrived, comes in from the field while they are at table, and seeing Odysseus, stands in awe, as he recognizes him.[68]

In the *Iliad*, too, there are a few anagnorises, but they are not part of the main plot, as are those in the *Odyssey*. The

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64 *ibid.*, 23. 181-189.
65 *ibid.*, 23. 225-230.
66 *ibid.*, 24. 321-322.
67 *ibid.*, 24. 336-337.
68 *ibid.*, 24. 391ff.

many discoveries in the Odyssey are what makes it a complex plot. However, in the first book of the Iliad Achilles, when in doubt whether he should slay Agamemnon or not, becomes aware of Athena's presence, who has come to stay his hand.

> στῆ δ' ὄπιθεν, ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἕλε Πηλείωνα
> οἴῳ φαινομένη· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὔ τις ὁρᾶτο·
> θάμβησεν δ' Ἀχιλεύς, μετὰ δ' ἐτράπετ', αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
> Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην.[69]

Again in the third book Helen recognizes Aphrodite, who has come to get her to go her husband, Menelaus.

> καί ῥ' ὡς οὖν ἐνόησε θεᾶς περικαλλέα δειρὴν
> στήθεά θ' ἱμερόεντα καὶ ὄμματα μαρμαίροντα,
> θάμβησέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε.[70]

Later in the episode of Diomede and Glaucus there is a double recognition. They recognize each other as friends of their fathers' house from of old.[71] Again in the rout of the Trojans which takes place as Patroclus leads forth the Myrmidons there is a sort of anagnorisis, though a false one. When the Trojans saw Patroclus, they thought, as he had hoped they would, that it was Achilles returning to do battle against them.[72] In the last book Hermes, after conducting Priam to the hut of Achilles, reveals himself to Priam.[73]

These are the various discoveries or anagnorises that occur in the two poems. How do these fit into the five types that

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69 Il. 1. 197-200.
70 Ibid., 3. 396-398.
71 Ibid., 6. 215ff.
72 Ibid., 16. 278ff.
73 Ibid., 24. 460-461.

are enumerated By Aristotle? Many of them can be put into several of the classes, since the classes are not mutually exclusive. However, we shall just give main classifications. The first is that by tokens or signs. An instance of recognition by a congenital sign is the recognition of Aphrodite by Helen; by acquired signs: the recognition of Odysseus by Eurycleia, by the swineherd and neatherd;[74] by externals: the recognition of Odysseus by Penelope (proof of the bedstead), of Odysseus by Laertes (proof of knowledge of the garden).

The second class of discoveries are those that are manufactured expressly by the poet. Such are the meeting of Nestor and Telemachus, the recognition of Odysseus by the Phaeacians, by the Cyclops, by Telemachus, by Swifty and by Dolius; the recognition of Athena by Achilles, the recognition of Diomedes and Galucus, and the recognition of Hermes by Priam.

An anagnorisis by memory is illustrated by Aristotle himself with Odysseus's weeping at the tale of the minstrel, Demodocus, in the hall of King Alcinous.[75] The fourth class of discovery is that by inference, such as the recognition of Telemachus by Helen; she reasons: here is someone who looks like Odysseus; but there is no one who looks like Odysseus, save Telemachus; therefore Telemachus is here. A false inference is in-

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74 Aristotle says that there is a better and a worse way of using these tokens; Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus because of the scar is better than the swineherd's, because it grows out of the plot, and is not constructed on purpose. cf. Poet. 1454b

75 Poet. 1455a 2.

stanced in the recognition of Patroclus as Achilles by the Trojans. They reason: one like Achilles and dressed in his armor is here; therefore, Achilles is here. Another instance of an inference can be found in the test Penelope proposes for Odysseus. No one but Odysseus knows the secret bedchamber; therefore if the stranger should know of it, he is Odysseus.[76] The fifth type of recognition is that which works itself out of the very plot itself; such are the recognition of Odysseus by Eurycleia. (It was highly probable that he should be washed by his old nurse, and be recognized by her). Likewise the recognition of Odysseus by the suitors can be classified here. So much for the notion of anagnorisis as it is found in Homer. This is one characteristic of Athenian drama[77] that is found abundantly in the Homeric poems.

Now to consider the third element that produces the tragic effect, calamity or suffering. As we have mentioned, Aristotle classified the Iliad as a tragedy of suffering because these characteristics are predominant in it. L. Campbell has well remarked:

> The misery and nothingness of human life had already been a frequent theme of reflection even in epic poetry -
>
> Of all that live and move upon the ground
> Nothing more sad than mortal man is found.
>
> 'Man has no comfort in mourning, save to shear the locks, and to let fall the tear.' Amidst the brightness and vividness of the Iliad this ever-recurring strain, that the

76 Throop, 20.
77 Perrin, passim.

> noble and the vile alike must die, affects us with strong and simple pathos. The burden of all the later books, 'Achilles' doom is ripe when Hector falls', gives a wonderful sense of transiency to the whole long poem. The counterpart of this is the undying power of the Olympian gods.[78]

Although the element of suffering is not as prominent in the Odyssey as it is in the Iliad, yet it is there. In fact, the sentiment quoted above from the Iliad by Campbell occurs in a little different form in the Odyssey also.[79] The suffering brought on the household of Odysseus, on Telemachus and Penelope, give evidence of the "pathos" of the Odyssey, not to mention the trials of the hero himself.

Aristotle laid down as an essential of a tragic plot a change of fortune, μετάβασις. The ideal change of fortune, he says, occurs when a good character through some hamartia or tragic error passes from good to bad fortune. Chancellor Throop tells us:

> . . .the epic conforms in the main to the regulations which he [Aristotle] lays down. We do not see men whom we would needfully designate as good passing from happiness to misery, or bad men passing from misery to happiness. The characters upon whom the Iliad and Odyssey are built are not preeminently virtuous and just, and their misfortunes, as e. g. in the case of Achilles, Agamemnon, and Odysseus, result primarily from an error of judgement or some analogous condition. They are in every case men of great reputation

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78 Guide to Greek Tragedy for English Readers, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1891, 105.

79 Od. 18. 130-131.

> and exalted position, and clearly in these matters set the standard for later tragic characters. In the perfect Plot the change must be from happiness to misery. We see the outstanding example of this in the *Iliad*, where Achilles, by what we may call an error in judgment, his wrath at Agamemnon, suffers the greatest grief he has known, and is reduced to misery from his former happiness. His position is entirely analogous to that of Creon in the Antigone, where the deaths of Haemon, the queen, and Antigone, result from Creon's stubborn purpose, and Creon later repents. In the same way Achilles and Agamemnon repent of the 'Wrath' after the death of Patroclus.[80]

What the *hamartia* is of Achilles and the other characters will be discussed in the following chapter on Character. Chancellor Throop has shown sufficiently that there is a change of fortune in each of the poems, although we may not agree entirely with all the minor points of the above quotation. In the case of Hector, too, there is also a change of fortunes, as was pointed out above when we were discussing peripety. Although the *Odyssey* is regarded by Aristotle as a tragedy, it does not contain the ideal μετάβασις in its main plot. The suitors, it is true, suffer a change of fortune -- from good to bad fortune. But we could hardly say that they were good characters with a mere *hamartia*. The first mention of them in the *Odyssey* sets their characters: οἵ τε οἱ αἰεὶ μῆλ' ἁδινὰ σφάζουσι καὶ εἰλίποδας ἕλικας βοῦς.[81] Because of their actions throughout the poem we are more inclined to label them as villains. C. M. Bowra

80 Throop, 9-10.
81 Od. 1. 91-92.

remarks by way of contrast:

> The suitors, like Achilles or Helen, are the victims of ἄτη, but they lack heroic or even lovable qualities, and their death stirs not our pity but our sense of justice.[82]

For this reason they seem to be a perfect example of another type of μετάβασις which Aristotle describes as the passage of a thoroughly bad man from good fortune to bad. The Stagirite says that such a plot might satisfy our feelings, but it arouses neither pity nor fear.[83] Undoubtedly, the double story and the opposite outcome for the good and bad characters, as Odysseus and the suitors, must have appealed to the audience then as now. That such an ending would appeal to many writers and critics in beyond all doubt, and suggestions of similar treatment are by no means wanting in the tragedians. The tragic pity and fear can be aroused, as they are in the <u>Odyssey</u>, under the conditions named, and we find no suggestion from Aristotle that such is not the case. It is significant, of course, that the <u>Odyssey</u> is selected to exemplify this type of plot, and not an example from Athenian tragedy. In this, as in so many other particulars, Homer and the epic are used as critical models because they furnish a perfect example of the good qualities of tragedy.

Aristotle divides the plot of a tragedy into two parts,

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82 <u>Tradition and Design in the Iliad</u>, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1930, 26. (The phrase "sense of justice" is often used to translate φιλάνθρωπον, which Fyfe in the Loeb edition translates as "satisfies our feelings". It seems that Bowra had this passage in Aristotle in mind, when writing these lines.)

83 <u>Poet</u>. 1453a 2.

which he calls δέσις and λύσις. In the handling of these elements of plot the true genius of Homer can really be seen. The complication of the plot, says Aristotle, is composed of things outside the true plot and some things in the story itself, which build up to what we call today the turning point. In the case of the Iliad, the whole Trojan war is not portrayed. From Homer's practice in this respect Horace formulated his rule.

> nec sic incipies ut scriptor cyclicus olim:
> 'fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum.'
> quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor hiatu?
> parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.
> quanto rectius hic qui nil molitur inepte:
> 'dic mihi, Musa, virum, captae post tempora Troiae
> qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbis.'
> . . . . .
> semper ad eventum festinat et in medias res
> non secus ac notas auditorem rapit. . .[84]

Once he has entered in medias res, Homer proceeds to give the necessary details. How skilfully he has done this has been well brought out by C. M. Bowra in the first chapter of Tradition and Design in the Iliad.[85] Naturally in epic poetry there will be more chance to expand the complication than in a tragic poem, whose average length was about 1500 lines. Even so, Homer is selective. Take, for instance, the Odyssey. The main idea is that Odysseus should get home. He is, however, held prisoner by the nymph, Calypso. Because of the solicitude of Athena for him Zeus sends Hermes to bid Calypso release him. Odysseus sails away on his raft, but when Poseidon spies him, he capsizes his raft. After swimming for quite some time, Odysseus lands in

84 Ars Poetica, 136-149, ed. by E. C. Wickham and H. W. Garrod in O. C. T. series, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1900.

85 2ff.

Phaeacia, whence he procures passage to Ithaca. Once on his native soil he plots the destruction of the suitors and reveals himself to his beloved wife, Penelope. This is the outline of the plot of the Odyssey. But what about those wonderful wanderings that took place before the landing on Calypso's isle. Homer has skilfully brought these in as a story, separate in itself but revealing the actions of Odysseus, which caused his long wanderings. In this way he has incorporated into the story material which is otherwise extraneous to the main plot.

According to Aristotle the denouement is to be an outgrowth of the plot itself, and not a deus ex machina solution. This is something that Homer did not know of; and probably would have ignored any way. We immediately recall the action of Apollo in the slaying of Patroclus. Homer himself says:

ἔνθ' ἄρα τοι, Πάτροκλε, φάνη βιότοιο τελευτή·
ἤντετο γάρ τοι Φοῖβος ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὑσμίνῃ.[86]

In the slaying of Hector by Achilles Athena was instrumental in leading on the victim by words and guile.[87] Finally, to stay the terrible grief of Achilles, and to make him cease mutilating the corpse of Hector, Thetis, his mother, is again brought on the scene.[88] In the Odyssey Athena comes in the guise of Mentor to help Odysseus, but does not help him so conspicuously as do the gods in the Iliad.[89]

86 Il. 16. 787-788.
87 Ibid., 22. 247.
88 Ibid., 24, 137-138.
89 Od. 22, 236-239.

Commentators seem to be at their wits' end in trying to explain away the action of the gods in these circumstances. And yet, explain as much as they will, the gods and their work still remain. Homer, no doubt, never heard of a _deus ex machina_, which was introduced in the time of Euripides, in the age of rationalism with its sophisticated ideas about the gods. The simplicity with which Homer uses his gods, whenever he pleases and howsoever he pleases, has always been noted in his poems. Whether we label their actions as a _deus ex machina_ solution (thus offending against Aristotelian canons) or not, we know that the plot still affects us the same.

There remains for our consideration one characteristic of an Aristotelian plot - its unity. Above all else the plot should be unified. Aristotle goes into great detail in his explanation of this characteristic. And throughout all of it we get the impression that he had Homer's poetry constantly before his mind's eye. The majority of the details fit the _Iliad_ and the _Odyssey_ perfectly. In fact, the unity of the two poems is one of the most cogent arguments that they were the product of one mind.[90] The order of the details in the poems, which hang so closely together by a logical chain of reasoning force this conclusion

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90 Even Wolf had to admit: "Quoties. . .penitus immergor in illum veluti prono et liquido alveo decurrentem tenorem actionum et narrationum: quoties animdverto ac reputo mecum quam in universum aestimanti _unus his carminibus insit color_. . . vix mihi quisquam irasci et succensere gravius poterit, quam ipse facio mihi." Preface to the Iliad, p. xxii; quoted by R. C. Jebb, _Homer: An Introduction to the Iliad and Odyssey_, Ginn and Co., Boston, 1899, 110. (Italics mine.)

on the reader of them. Indeed, in this regard I am wholly in agreement with Professor Bowra, when he says:

> It is now possible to take the *Iliad* as we have it and to consider it as poetry, and particularly we may try to distinguish in it those elements which belong to the traditional epic art and those which seem to betray the hand of the creative poet. Such an inquiry does not assume that the *Iliad* is the unaided work of one man, but it does assume that its present form is the product of a single mind transforming traditional material into an artistic whole. On the other hand it excludes the view that the completed poem is largely the result of chance and caprice, and on the other hand the view that the poet was completely his own master and the *Iliad* is what it is simply because Homer chose so to compose it. It seems probable that there was a single poet called Homer, who gave the *Iliad* its final shape and artistic unity, but who worked in a traditional style on traditional matter.[91]

I am not going to do what might seem like belaboring the obvious by showing that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have the Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. By this remark Aristotle wanted to impress upon us the need of causal connections in the plot which insure its unity.

Homer has made use of a device which insures in a remarkable way the unity and continuity of his poems. The Scholiasts called it προαναφώνησις. Professor G. E. Duckworth[92] calls it one of the numerous ways in which Homer reveals his conscious art. Since it is the poet's desire to hold the interest of the audience

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91 *op. cit.*, 1.

92 "Προαναφώνησις in the Scholia to Homer," *A. J. P.*, LII (1931), 320.

in the narrative that is unfolding, he makes great use of prophecy and foreshadowing of events, to achieve this end. Either he alludes more or less vaguely to the later actions of the poems, or he foretells definitely what the later events will be. Forecasting of the future: Agamemnon is visited by the false dream;[93] it was not destined for Odysseus to slay Sarpedon;[94] the use of the word νήπιος.[95] The effect that this device had on the audience greatly aided the poet in his task of arousing the proper emotions of pity and fear.

Another device used by Homer to secure unity and continuity of plot is the so-called "Law of Affinity", of Bougot. S. E. Bassett describes it thus:

> In the Homeric narrative the last person to retire at night is the first to rise the next morning. The assembly is 'dismissed' by the last speaker or the last person mentioned. The divinity who sends the fair wind, Apollo, Athena, Calypso, or Circe, is the one who is <u>uppermost in the mind of the listener</u>. It follows that when two persons, objects, or ideas, have been mentioned, it is the second which is uppermost in the mind. In the catalogue the Greek forces are described, then the Trojans; in the episode immediately following (Γ 2,8), the Trojans advance first, then the Greeks. But in the second onset of the two armies (Δ 427, 433) the Greeks are the first to move forward because our attention has been centered on them. This principle -- which is almost a law in Homer -- may be stated thus: When two or more coordinate

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93 Il. 2. 16ff.
94 Ibid., 5. 674-675; other examples: Il. 11. 604; 12. 37f.; 22. 5-6; Od. 9. 528-535.
95 Il. 2. 38; 872f.; 12. 113; 16. 46f.; 18. 311.

> ideas are repeated, the order, *ceteris paribus*, is inverted: ab ba.[96]

It may seem that we are reading something into Homeric poetry. But numerous examples of it can be found.[97] An excellent example of it is cited by Bassett.

> Odysseus asks the shade of his mother (a) of her own death, whether she died (b) of disease, or (c) by the gentle darts of Artemis; (d) of Laertes; (e) of Telemachus; (f) whether another has taken possession of his estate and royal power; and (g) of Penelope. Anticleia answers these seven questions in exactly the opposite order: 'Penelope remains in thy halls (g); no one has taken thy kingship (f); Telemachus is master of thine estate (e); thy father dwells in the fields (d); and I died, not by the gentle darts of Artemis (c); nor by disease (b); but of grief for thee (a).'[98]

This artistic device did not pass unnoticed in antiquity. Aristarchus replied to the objection of a certain Praxiphanes, saying that it was a peculiar habit of the poet always to recur to the latter point first.[99] Cicero in a letter to Atticus says that he will answer his two questions ὕστερον πρότερον Ὁμηρικῶς. He answers the second and then the first.[100]

These are a few of the concrete devices which Homer has employed to insure the unity of his poems. Aristotle frequently[101]

96 *The Poetry of Homer*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Cal., 1938, 120.
97 *Il.* 15. 55; 143ff.; 157; 221; 229-232; 308-322. *Od.* 7. 238f. 11. 160f.; 170f.; 210f.; 492f.; 14. 115f.; 15. 347f.; 509f.; 24. 106f.; 288f.
98 *Poetry of Homer*, 121.
99 *Pap. Oxyr.* 1086, on B 763 (quoted by Bassett, 120).
100 *Ad Att.* I. 16, 1.
101 *Met.* 1045a 12-14: ὁ δ' ὁρισμὸς λόγος ἐστὶν εἷς οὐ συνδέσμῳ καθάπερ ἡ Ἰλιάς, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἑνὸς εἶναι. cf. *An. Post.* 93b 35

speaks of the unity of the *Iliad* as a σύνδεσμος, a "bonding together". Using this as a clue, Bassett investigated the *Iliad*, and found three threads of the plot, which are linked into a unit by this σύνδεσμος. At first reading, he tells us, we are likely to overlook this bond, and to find a more or less inorganic mass of hero portraits, battle pictures, and episodic interludes.

> But if we pore over the poem until it becomes to us, as it did to Aristotle, εὐσύνοπτον, and if all the while we let Homer's strong vertical light play upon it, we may discover a triple strand that runs through the countless episodes, appearing with sufficient clearness to unite them all and make each contribute to a single plot of surprising definiteness and power.[102]

The three strands are 1) the Wrath of Achilles, which is the chief unifying element; 2) the plan of Zeus (which Bassett takes to be the plan which Zeus forms and carries out at the request of Thetis to honor Achilles -- following Aristophanes and Aristarchus); 3) the Instrument, Hector, whom Zeus uses in carrying out this plan.

L. Adam, though he disagrees with Bassett's interpretation of Zeus's plan, has shown that the unity of the *Iliad*'s plot can be seen from another angle.

> Es bleibt demnach gar keine andere Erklaerung der Einheit der Ilias uebrig als die oben erwaehnte des Euklides [i. e.,

102 "The Three Threads of Plot in the *Iliad*", *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, LIII (1922), 52.

> that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* form a cycle, the Trojan war, and that in both of them the "Plan of Zeus" is to destroy men because of their evil deeds], der auch Aristoteles huldigte, waehrend die des Aristarch [i.e., to fulfill the request of Thetis] unrichtig ist. Der Philosoph behauptet, Homer habe nur einen *Teil* jener kriegerischen Begebenheiten fuer seiner Darstellung herausgenommen und viele der uebrigen zu Episoden benutzt, wohin der Katalog und viele andere Episoden gehoerten, mit denen er seine Dichtung erweitere. Es kann dann die Einheit der tragischen Handlung nicht in der μῆνις liegen, da die grosse Episode vom 2.--7. Buche nach dem Zeugnisse der Alten nichts mit der μῆνις zu thun hat, ebensowenig wie die Aristiien Agamemnons und anderer in den spaeteren Buechern. Die hoehere Einheit des ganzen Werkes liegt also in der βουλὴ Διός, die das ausfuehrt, was nach den Cyprien Zeus mit Thetis beraten hat. Zweck des trojanischen Kriegs war, die Erde von der Last der Menschen zu erleichtern. Dieser wird, wie oben bemerkt, in den Cyprien gar nicht erreicht, sondern erst in der Ilias.[103]

The dissectors of the *Odyssey* have been few in number when they are compared to those of the *Iliad*. One reason for this is the fact that the plot of the *Odyssey* is much more unified. The first four books, the Telemachy, centers all our interest on Odysseus, creating an atmosphere of suspense which will be fitting for the actual appearance of the hero on the stage. In the *Odyssey* the entire story is concerned with the homecoming of the hero. And so it is only fitting that we learn something of that home, and of the conditions that prevail there, in order that we

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103 Adam, 53-54.

may fully realize for what he is striving. The much-maligned last book of the *Odyssey*, too, is an integral part, and must be defended on artistic lines, since it gives a fitting conclusion to all of Odysseus's wanderings. Many strings would be left untied if the last book were left out of the poem. With it the whole work becomes wonderfully εὐσύνοπτον, according to Aristotle's prescription. The mutual anxiety of Odysseus and Laertes has been a note that strikes our attention constantly throughout the poem; we would have a 'loose-end', if the poem should end without their actually meeting each other. S. E. Bassett[104] has observed that the epilogue of the *Odyssey* serves as the epilogue of the two poems. Whether Homer intended this or not we cannot say, but at any rate Bassett's reasons are plausible. The account of the burial of Achilles is necessary; this is the choice that Achilles made -- to stay at Troy and win glory. He died fighting. Men and God mourned him. And finally Agamemnon, who had inflicted the only injury to Achilles's honor in the *Iliad*, attests his glory and heightens it by contrast to his own ignoble end. Though he had given gifts to Achilles, he never *said*, "I'm sorry". This is his repentance. And it makes a superb conclusion for the *Iliad* as well as for the *Odyssey*.

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104 "The Second Necyia Again," *A. J. P.*, XLIV (1923), 50. (On linguistic and other grounds is the defense of the twenty-fourth book made by Bassett here. J. W. Mackail, who admits the organic unity of the *Odyssey*, is, however, in favor of excluding it on purely literary grounds; "for the evidence for its retention is, as regards both language and metre, so slight as to be negligible." - "The Epilogue of the *Odyssey*", in *Greek Poetry and Life*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1936, I.)

Aristotle, we will remember, condemned episodic plots in tragedy, i. e., those that were entirely irrelevant to the main plot, and described matters that were ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος. Bad poets write such plays because they cannot help it, he tells us, and good poets write them to please the actors. Writing as they do for competition they often strain the plot beyond its capacity and are thus pressed to sacrifice continuity. But this is bad work, since tragedy represents not only a complete action but also incidents that cause fear and pity, and this happens most of all when the incidents are unexpected and yet one is a consequence of the other.[105] And so a good tragedy is to be sparing in episodes that do not contribute anything to the causal connections in the plot.

> The test of unity is. . .supposing anything were omitted, would it be missed? If its withdrawal would impair the fabric, then there is unity. If anything might be withdrawn without the loss being felt, that element is clearly a unit for itself and no part of the other.[106]

Yet in epic poetry we naturally look for episodes, since it is a kind of poetry that abounds in stories elaborately told. Aristotle himself tells us that the episodes are short in drama, but it is by the use of them that the epic gains its length.[107] Again, epic differs from tragedy in the length of the composition and in metre.[108] Accordingly, when contrasting epic and tragic

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105 Poet. 1451b 37ff.
106 D. S. Margoliouth, The Homer of Aristotle, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1923, 100-101.
107 Poet. 1455b 15.
108 ibid., 1459b 17.

poetry at the end of the Poetics Aristotle admits that the former art has less unity, since several tragedies can often be made from the plot of a single epic. If the epic poet were to use a very simple plot, his story would be brief and curtailed, and although it may conform to the limit of length, it would be thin and watered down. But Aristotle no sooner makes this observation than he hastens to qualify it; he is speaking of an epic that is composed of several separate actions.

> λέγω δὲ οἷον ἐὰν ἐκ πλειόνων πράξεων ᾖ συγκειμένη, ὥσπερ ἡ Ἰλιὰς ἔχει πολλὰ τοιαῦτα μέρη καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια, καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ἔχει μέγεθος (καίτοι ταῦτα τὰ ποιήματα συνέστηκεν ὡς ἐνδέχεται ἄριστα καὶ ὅτι μάλιστα μιᾶς πράξεως μιμησις).[109]

In the poems of Homer there are two kinds of episodes; there are those that describe matters that are ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος, and there are those that have an integral part to play in the plot. In the first class can be listed seven in the two poems: in the Iliad, the Catalogues of the Greeks, Trojans and Myrmidons, the later destruction of the Greeks' wall; in the Odyssey, the description of the gardens of Alcinous, the Boar Hunt, and the family history of Theoclymenus. In the second class we put the Phaeacian episode, the Diomedeia, and possibly the Doloneia. Those in the first class offend against the canons set forth by Aristotle for a truly unified poem. Did Homer write them merely for the audience? It seems quite probable that he did, since

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109 ibid., 1462b 7f.

such genealogies, etc. were expected of the ancient bards in their poems. They were traditional, and the poet had to insert them into his poetry. If excuse be needed for these episodes, we can only say that they are of the nature of epic poetry. Homer was not writing an Athenian tragedy. Aside from this, I think that the plots in both poems have a real unity.

Aristotle made the remark, ἐκ μὲν Ἰλιάδος καὶ Ὀδυσσείας μία τραγῳδία ποιεῖται ἑκατέρας ἢ δύο μόναι.[110] He did not mean that this is possible because the poems lacked unity, but rather because of the diversified scenes that were unified in them. The unity comes from the fact that Homer takes only one part of the story of Troy, and uses many incidents from other parts, such as the Catalogue of the ships, and the scene of Helen and the elders on the wall of Troy, to diversify his poetry.

Lastly, a unified plot must have a certain magnitude, and yet be εὐσύνοπτον. That the Iliad and the Odyssey have magnitude of length is sufficiently clear from a mere reading of them. Aristotle prescribed a magnitude that would permit a μετάβασις, which we have already seen is present in both poems. However, the question may be asked whether or not the plot of these poems is capable of being comprehended in one view? This has been denied Homer.

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110 Poet. 1459b 2. This remark has caused commentators much trouble, when they attempt to interpret it. For a discussion cf. I. Bywater, Aristotle on the Art of Poetry, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1909, 308; S. E. Bassett, The Poetry of Homer 233; A. Gudeman, Aristoteles Poetik, de Gruyter, Berlin, 1934, 394, 451.

> Den generellen Unterschied der virgilischen Handlung von der Homerischen koennte man wohl so bezeichnen, dass bei Homer der Handlung ihre Bedeutung in sich selbst traegt, waehrend es bei Virgil auf die Erreichung eines Ziels hinauslaeuft. Man hat ja bei Homer so oft den Eindruck dass der Erzaehler das Ziel seiner Handlung aus dem Auge verliert; er verweilt, wie A. W. Schlegel schoen gesagt hat, 'bei jedem Punkte der Vergangenheit mit so ungeteilter Seele, als ob demselbem nichts vorher gegangen sei und auch nichts darauf folgen solte, wodurch das Erquickliche einer lebendigen Gegenwart ueberall gleichmaessig verbreitet wird.'[111]

In other words, according to Heinze Homer's plots are not εὐσύνοπτον. After all that has been said, we can do nothing but deny this. It is quite clear to anyone who would read the poems as a whole that they are εὐσύνοπτα. We can answer Heinze first by pitting authority against authority.

> Dans l'Iliade, au contraire, tout est mesuré. Il en résulte que le poème, dans son entier, présente éminemment cette qualité qu'Aristote a si bien definie dans sa Poétique par le terme d'εὐσύνοπτον L'Iliade comme il le dit, se laisse bien embrasser d'un seul coup d'oeil. Lorsqu'on vient de la lire d'un bout à l'autre, on n'a pas d'effort à faire pour se la représenter tout entière: les parties essentielles reparaissent d'elles-memes dans la mémoire, et les autres, moins nettes, ne sont cependant pas tellement effacées qu'elles ne forment comme un fond à cette image poétique. On ne peut s'empêcher alors de remarquer que l'étendue acquise peu à peu par le poeme dans ses accroissements successifs lui a donné une grandeur d'aspect que les chants primitifs ne

111 R. Heinze, Virgils Epische Technik, Druck und Verlag von B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, 1903, p. 312.

possedaient pas au même degré.[112]

And concerning the Odyssey:

> L'Odyssée, considérée dans son ensemble, est, comme l'Iliade, un poème facile à embrasser d'un coup d'oeil, εὐσύνοπτον. Même ampleur et même mesure à la fois dans le récit: lorsqu'on le lit de suite, on arrive à la fin sans avoir rien oublié d'essentiel.[113]

It seems to me that a good proof that both of the poems are εὐσύνοπτον is the fact that they can be briefly outlined. Aristotle did it for us in the Poetics in the case of the Odyssey.

> ἀποδημοῦντός τινος ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ παραφυλαττομένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος καὶ μόνου ὄντος, ἔτι δὲ τῶν οἴκοι οὕτως ἐχόντων ὥστε τὰ χρήματα ὑπὸ μνηστήρων ἀναλίσκεσθαι καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἐπιβουλεύεσθαι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἀφικνεῖται χειμασθείς, καὶ ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς αὐτὸς ἐπιθέμενος αὐτὸς μὲν ἐσώθη τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς διέφθειρε.[114]

Gudeman has made a similar outline for the Iliad.

> Nach langjaehriger Belagerung einer Stadt entzweit sich einer der Fuehrer mit dem Oberbefehlshaber und zieht sich grollend vom Kampfe zurueck. Erst als sein Freund von der Hand des feindlichen Feldherrn gefallen ist, versteht er sich zur Versoehnung, um sich an dessen Uberwinder zu raechen, was auch geschieht.[115]

If it were not possible to do this to the two poems, we might be inclined to agree with Heinze. L. Adam cites the testimony of Eustathius in this regard, which is quite interesting.

112 A. et M. Croiset, Histoire de la Littérature Grecque, Ancienne Libraire, Fontemoing et Cie., Paris, 1928, I, 214.
113 ibid., 344.
114 Poet. 1455b 17ff.
115 op. cit., 314.

> Ueber die Anlage des Epos aeussern sich die Spaeteren uebereinstimmend mit Aristoteles. Eustathius stellt 5, 31 an die Spitze seiner Eroerterungen den Satz: ὅτι ἓν μέν τι συνεχὲς διόλου καὶ εὐάρμοστον ἡ τῆς Ἰλιάδος ποίησις. Vorher hat er bemerkt (5, 6ff.): ταύτην τὴν βίβλον συλληπτικώτερον Ἰλιάδα ἐκάλεσε . . . ὅτι περιέχει τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἴλιον συμπεσόντα ἤτοι τὰ Τρωϊκά, und ebenda 31: σημείωσαι ὅτι τὸ μὲν εἰπεῖν Ὁμήρου Ἰλιὰς ταὐτόν ἐστι τῷ Ὁμήρου Τρωϊκά. Obwohl mir eine Haupthandlung aus dem ganzen trojanischen Kriege gewaehlt ist, hat doch der Dichter auch der uebrigen Teile desselben gedacht, ganz so wie Aristoteles es Kap. XXIII, 5 behauptet.[116]

We have examined the poems of Homer in the light of Aristotle's prescriptions for plot. Almost all of the points which Aristotle claimed to be necessary for a good tragic plot are to be found in Homer to some degree at least. They are not all fully verified in his poetry, but the major points are. The investigations of this chapter have brought to light some of the reasons why Aristotle was induced to look on Homer as a tragedian, even according to his own standards which he so definitely set forth in the Poetics.

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116 op. cit., 41.

CHAPTER IV

TREATMENT OF CHARACTER

In the eyes of Aristotle character was the second in importance of all the six elements of tragedy. Plot was the most essential. The English word "character" tends to convey a little more than was most likely meant by the Greek word ἦθος, which is defined by Aristotle καθ' ὃ ποιούς τινας εἶναί φαμεν τοὺς πράττοντας.[1] It is that which reveals a choice.[2] By ἦθος Aristotle most probably meant only the moral side of a man's character; the intellectual aspect seems to have been expressed by διάνοια. He tells us further, that although character makes men what they are, it is the scenes they act in that makes them happy or the opposite.[3] This definitely indicates that ἦθος refers to the moral aspect included under the English word "character". For this reason L. Cooper[4] translates it as "moral bent", reserving the word "character" for the purpose of expressing the combination of ἦθος and διάνοια. Aristotle tells us too that thought and character influence the action of the plot.[5] Here he has linked together the two notions - expressive of their

1 Poet. 1450a 5.
2 ibid., 1450b 8; cf. also Rhet. 1417a 20ff.
3 ibid., 1450a 19.
4 Aristotle on the Art of Poetry, An Amplified Version with Supplementary Illustrations for Students of English, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1913, 22.
5 Poet. 1449b 38.

close relationship. Since both of these are kindred ideas, the opinion expressing which is predominant in any given instance may seem rather subjective. Yet, if we follow the norms of Aristotle for each, we will, I think, avoid being too subjective. As in the case of plot, so too in regard to character Aristotle had some very definite ideas. A brief resume of those ideas will follow.

In Aristotle's estimation character is included in a tragedy only for the sake of the plot; without it a tragedy is still possible. Indeed, tragedies with speeches full of character and eloquent diction are less effective than tragedies of stirring and dynamic plots.[6] You can have a tragedy without character, but not without a plot.[7]

In sketching tragic characters four points are to be attended to: the person should be good (χρηστός)[8], i. e., his words and actions should reveal some good choice; he should be appropriate to the personage portrayed (ἁρμόττων); he should be "like" (ὅμοιος), i. e., like to the traditional person; and lastly he should be consistent (ὁμαλός).[9] These prescriptions are general, and would apply as well to any play, even to those dramas which are not tragic. In particular, the tragic hero should not be a paragon of virtue and righteousness, yet through

6 *ibid.*, 1450a 29.
7 *ibid.*, 1450a 24.
8 χρηστός is the verbal adjective of χράομαι, and means 1) "useful," "good of its kind"; 2) in moral sense, "good", "noble".
9 *Poet.* 1454a 16.

no badness or villainy of his own should he fall into misfortune, but rather should he be a good character, whose downfall is the result of a hamartia.[10] As living persons are objects of representation, these must necessarily be heroic or inferior -- for characters are normally thus distinguished, since ethical differences depend upon vice or virtue -- that is to say, either better than ourselves or worse or much what we are.[11] Inevitability and probability should be the guides of character-portrayal.[12] However, since tragedy is a representation of men better than ourselves, we must take care to paint them better than they are, i. e., the poet should idealize them,[13] as Homer and Sophocles do.[14]

Our task, now, is to examine the poetry of Homer in the light of this summary of Aristotelian precepts for character-portrayal. The Stagirite referred to the Odyssey as τραγῳδία ἠθική, because the element of "character" was more prominent in that poem than πάθος. However, in calling the Iliad παθητική, he did not intend to imply that character-portrayal was lacking in it. Indeed, in the Iliad, the personages may have even better defined characters than those of the Odyssey, but they are more subordinated to the plot in the Iliad, which is one of great πάθος, The character of Achilles is far more tragic than any in the

10 ibid., 1453a 9.
11 ibid., 1450b 3.
12 ibid., 1454a 33.
13 ibid., 1454b 8ff.
14 ibid., 1448a 25ff.

Odyssey. Nevertheless, the whole plot - which is an *Iliad* and not an *Achilleid* - affects one more by the calamity and suffering it portrays than by the character-sketches.

The tragic character should first of all be good. The character will be good if the choices he makes are good. Yet, we cannot adequately discuss this quality without bringing in immediately some mention of what Aristotle had previously said about the 'goodness' of a tragic hero. In chapter thirteen he states that the man should not be a paragon of virtue and righteousness, but should undergo his change in fortune through some tragic error, and not through vice. The tragic character, then, should a) be substantially good, b) reveal a good choice, c) be brought to his downfall by some *hamartia*.[15]

15 The question of *hamartia* has always been a vexed one. Does it mean a moral fault, a defect in character, or an error in judgement? As far as Aristotle is concerned, there seems to be little doubt that the word means no more than an "error in judgement". "Attentive to all that conditions morality, he classifies with minute care the carious errors that go to vitiate our acts, but his analysis never takes him higher than the human reason. At the basis of all his analyses and all his conclusions lies Socrates' fundamental principle: all wickedness is ignorance. Corrected, completed, made full and flexible with all the necessary precision of detail, this principle still rules Aristotle's ethics; 'The wicked man is ignorant of what is to be done or not done; and it is this kind of error that makes men unjust and, speaking generally, bad.' 1110b 28-30 At the root of the evil, therefore lies an ἁμαρτία or an ἁμάρτημα, that is to say an initial error of judgement, which in the upshot causes the action to miss the mark it aims at." (E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, transl. by A. H. C. Downes, Chas. Scribner's Sons, N. Y., 1940, 330) This is not incompatible with our explanation of ἦθος as expressing the moral aspect of a man's character; the two can be reconciled. The error in judgment refers to a man's practical intellect, while the notion of διάνοια will refer chiefly to his speculative intellect. The

Now in Achilles we have an example of Aristotle's "good" character. Homer's portrayal of Achilles presents him as an essentially noble character.[16] The poet calls him μεγάθυμος[17] and ἀμύμων.[18] In the beginning of the Iliad we see him as a generous, noble warrior, who fears not death, but seeks only justice. When the darts of Apollo have been assailing the hosts for days, it is Achilles who assembles the army and suggests that the seer be called in to divine the anger of the god.[19] It is Achilles who bids the seer, Calchas, take heart and speak forth.[20] He is seeking only what is right, and will let not even Agamemnon stand in his way. Achilles, too, protects the rights of the

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idea of hamartia as a moral fault is most likely due to Christianity; as such it is probably to be applied to modern drama, if it is to be applied at all. A. M. Festugière explains well the reason for this, and the difference between it and the Greek notion: "Pécher, en Grec, se dit ἁμαρτάνειν, et ἁμαρτάνειν, c'est proprement manquer le but. Pour un Grec, le mot n'éveillera rien d'autre, on ne quitte pas le plan humain, la référence à l'homme et à son bonheur. Un chrétien évoque aussitot l'idée de Dieu, d'offense à Dieu, d'instinct il se réfère à Dieu, à sa majeste infinie: on perçoit toute la distance." ("La Notion du péché présentée par S. Thomas," New Scholasticism, V (1931), 337) By way of substantiating this, cf. P. Van Braam, "Aristotle's Use of 'Hamartia'," C. Q., VI (1912), 266-272, where the passages in the Ethics are discussed in connection with the doctrine of the Poetics. In the Ethics Aristotle couples ἁμάρτημα and ἄγνοια. (cf. III. vii. 3)

16 Dryden disagrees entirely. "Homer, who had chosen another moral, makes both Agamemnon and Achilles vicious; for his design was to instruct in virtue, by showing the deformity of vice." ("Virgil and the Aeneid", Dramatic Essays, J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., London, 1928, 224)

17 Il. 17. 214; 21. 153; 23. 168; 18. 226; 19. 75, etc.

18 Il. 2. 674, 770; 9. 181; 10. 323; 17. 280; 22. 278, etc.; Od. II.470.

19 Il. 1. 54ff.

20 Ibid., 85ff.

host, from whom Agamemnon is demanding another prize.[21] This stirs the anger of Agamemnon to turn upon him too. He answers Agamemnon solely on the grounds of justice; the Trojans never harried in any wise _his_ kine or horses, nor did they lay waste _his_ fields;

> ἀλλὰ σοί, ὦ μέγ' ἀναιδές, ἅμ' ἑσπόμεθ', ὄφρα σὺ χαίρῃς,
> τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάῳ σοί τε, κυνῶπα
> πρὸς Τρώων.[22]

Strong words are these, but justified. Agamemnon taunts him still more, and Athene comes to stay Achilles' hand from slaying Agamemnon. He chooses to obey her.[23] The disgust which the son of Peleus shows toward the cheap way in which Agamemnon continually acts is fully manifested and realized, if we look upon the king as a mere foil to Achilles. Homer has portrayed Agamemnon as a selfish person, a worthless fighter and a still worse general. By contrast with him we learn that Achilles is χρηστός. He departed from battle only because he could not see eye to eye with the views of Agamemnon, which were entirely those of a miserly and grasping potentate, always courting the expedient. In the first book of the _Iliad_ Homer has given us a picture of Achilles, which fits well the prescription of Aristotle that the tragic hero should be "good". He is not the paragon of virtue and righteousness, which Aristotle said was to be avoided. His

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21 _ibid._, 122f.
22 _ibid._, 158-160.
23 _ibid._, 216.

argument with Agamemnon brings that out sufficiently.[24] Rather is he a perfect example of Aristotle's hero.

Throughout the rest of the Iliad we can find instances that bear out the impression of his character which we gather in the first book. Andromache's speech, in which she describes the destruction that Achilles wrought in her family, laying waste the city, Thebe, killing her father and brothers, in a subtle way gives testimony to the description of Achilles' character.

κατὰ δ' ἔκτανεν Ἠετίωνα,
οὐδέ μιν ἐξενάριξε, σεβάσσατο γάρ τό γε θυμῷ,
ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν κατέκηε σὺν ἔντεσι δαιδαλέοισιν
ἠδ' ἐπὶ σῆμ' ἔχεεν· περὶ δὲ πτελέας ἐφύτευσαν
νύμφαι ὀρεστιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο.
οἳ δέ μοι ἑπτὰ κασίγνητοι ἔσαν ἐν μεγάροισιν
οἳ μὲν πάντες ἰῷ κίον ἤματι Ἄϊδος εἴσω·
πάντας γὰρ κατέπεφνε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς
βουσὶν ἐπ' εἰλιπόδεσσι καὶ ἀργεννῇς ὀΐεσσι.
μητέρα δ', ἣ βασίλευεν ὑπὸ Πλάκῳ ὑληέσσῃ
τὴν ἐπεὶ ἂρ δεῦρο ἤγαγε ἅμ' ἄλλοισι κτεάτεσσιν,
ἂψ ὅ γε τὴν ἀπέλυσε λαβὼν ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα.[25]

His concern for the wounded man whom Nestor led forth from battle shows us a gentler side of his character.[26] Though raging in his hut, he still feels for his friends. His tenderness is likewise manifested in his dealing with Patroclus.[27] When speeding forth the Myrmidons to battle, he shows another side of his make-up,

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24 C. M. Bowra says: "In this scene Achilles is guilty of a lack of αἰδώς to his superior lord." (Tradition and Design in the Iliad, 18). This may be true, provided we do not take this lack of αἰδώς to be Achilles' hamartia, as Bowra does. Achilles is really not in the wrong here; his actions in this scene are not the direct cause of his catastrophe.

25 Il. 6. 416-427.

26 Ibid., 11. 611-615.

27 Ibid., 16. 7ff.

which was hitherto concealed under the cloak of his warrior's wrath.[28] The grief he feels for Patroclus, his dearest friend, which is even allowed to thrust aside his anger, and to move him to action against his oath, is one of the most telling testimonies of his noble character.[29] Finally, magnanimity is set as a fitting crown upon that noble character, as he chooses to allow Priam to ransom the body of Hector.

τῇδ' εἴη· ὃς ἄποινα φέροι καὶ νεκρὸν ἄγοιτο,
εἰ δὴ πρόφρονι θυμῷ Ὀλύμπιος αὐτὸς ἀνώγει.[30]

This is the answer that he makes to Thetis, as she persuades him to cease mutilating the corpse. If Achilles were wicked at heart and an utter villain, the final scene of reconciliation could never have taken place. His treatment of Priam,[31] his promise to desist from battle until the funeral of Hector is over,[32] serve only to confirm our first impression of his substantial goodness. At heart Achilles is χρηστός. The stock epithets "impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,"[33] express Achilles' character, as influenced by the wrath he cherishes for Agamemnon. But they do not give us an adequate picture of a person who is fundamentally noble, and who also possesses many gentler qualities.

The choices which Achilles makes (Aristotle said that a

28 ibid., 16. 155, 200, 232.
29 ibid., 18. 22ff.
30 ibid., 24. 139-140.
31 ibid., 24. 508, 515-516, 549-551.
32 ibid., 24. 670.
33 Horace, Ars Poetica, 121.

character would be good, if the person made good choices), were on the whole good. From these we build up our idea of him as a "good" character. Yet what of his great choice in the ninth book to remain away from battle? Aristotle also said that the change of foruntes in a tragedy should be from good to bad, and should be due to some <u>great</u> flaw in the character of such a man as we have described.[34] Though Achilles is a good character, he is weakened by his <u>hamartia</u>, which is the cause of the catastrophe that comes upon him. Various opinions have been set forth as to what this <u>hamartia</u> is. Substantially I agree with Professor Bassett.[35] Achilles' error in judgment comes only in the ninth book, when he rejects the plea of his friend Ajax to fight <u>at once</u>. In the first book of the <u>Iliad</u> Achilles withdrew from battle saying that the Greeks would feel their loss.[36] While he sat by the seashore, he brooded, and as he broods, the insult of Agamemnon grows to greater proportions. When the envoys come from Agamemnon, they find him trying to cheer his soul with music - a poor substitute in his desolation. His greeting to these envoys clearly reveals his condition.

> χαίρετον· ἦ φίλοι ἄνδρες ἱκάνετον· ἦ τι μάλα χρεώ,
> οἵ μοι σκυζομένῳ περ Ἀχαιῶν φίλτατοι ἔστον.[37]

He hails them, thinking that his friends are coming over to his side. But when Odysseus begins to speak, he soon sizes up the

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34 Poet. 1453a 13-17 (δι' ἁμαρτίαν μεγάλην).
35 "The Ἁμαρτία of Achilles", <u>T</u>. <u>A</u>. <u>P</u>. <u>A</u>., LXV (1934), 47-69; cf. also <u>The Poetry of Homer</u>, 194ff.
36 <u>Il</u>. 1. 240-244.
37 <u>ibid</u>., 9. 197-198.

real purpose of their journey. Odysseus offers him gifts, which Agamemnon will give him, if only he will return to battle - if only he will save the Greeks. These Achilles rejects, and gives his reasons, citing all the selfish acts which Agamemnon has perpetrated since he came to Troy. All of them loom only too large in Achilles' mind, since he has had time to brood and recall them. Now he can recite them all only too easily. Nor is Achilles to be blamed for rejecting the gifts; this is not his *hamartia*. Nestor had advised Agamemnon:

> φραζώμεσθ' ὥς κέν μιν ἀρεσσάμενοι πεπίθωμεν
> δώροισίν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσί τε μειλιχίοισιν.[38]

But Agamemnon offers gifts only - without the "gentle words" of apology. His offer is a mere *quid pro quo* for the renewed assistance of the man who was worth a dozen armies. Material wealth is the thing that counts in Agamemnon's eyes, whereas for Achilles it is honor that is all important. Unless Agamemnon repents,[39] and honors Achilles *publicly* (in public he had insulted him, and he tries now to win him over *at night, without the knowledge of the rest of the army, in the presence only of a few chosen friends*), Achilles will have no part with him. He is not to be blamed for rejecting the gifts. In his eyes they only confirmed all that he had thought about Agamemnon, who would naturally use them as the only measure of value. Odysseus seems to realize that he is not persuading Achilles by this argument,

38 *ibid.*, 112-113.
39 Bowra (*op. cit.*, 19) says that he does, but offers no references to substantiate his assertion.

ending his speech thus:

> εἰ δέ τοι Ἀτρείδης μὲν ἀπήχθετο κηρόθι μᾶλλον,
> αὐτὸς καὶ τοῦ δῶρα, σὺ δ' ἄλλους περ Παναχαιοὺς
> τειρομένους ἐλέαιρε κατὰ στρατόν.[40]

Phoenix then tries to persuade Achilles to accept Agamemnon's gifts, but succeeds no more than did Odysseus. Finally, it is Ajax who makes a pin-prick in the iron-hearted Achilles. "It is the blunt and staunch old soldier Ajax who finally shakes the determination of Achilles. Ajax is the fighter <u>par excellence</u>, not a moralizer."[41] He speaks only of love for one's comrades in battle.

> αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
> ἄγριον ἐν στήθεσσι θέτο μεγαλήτορα θυμόν,
> σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ μετατρέπεται φιλότητος ἑταίρων
> τῆς ᾗ μιν παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτίομεν ἔξοχον ἄλλων,
> νηλής . . .
> σὺ δ' ἵλαον ἔνθεο θυμόν,
> αἴδεσσαι δὲ μέλαθρον· ὑπωρόφιοι δέ τοί εἰμεν
> πληθύος ἐκ Δαναῶν, μέμαμεν δέ τοι ἔξοχον ἄλλων
> κήδιστοί τ' ἔμεναι καὶ φίλτατοι, ὅσσοι Ἀχαιοί.[42]

The reply of Achilles is his <u>hamartia</u>.

> Αἶαν διογενὲς Τελαμώνιε, κοίρανε λαῶν,
> πάντα τί μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἐείσαο μυθήσασθαι·
> ἀλλά μοι οἰδάνεται κραδίη χόλῳ, ὁππότε κείνων
> μνήσομαι, ὥς μ' ἀσύφηλον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν
> Ἀτρεΐδης, ὡς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην.
> ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς ἔρχεσθε καὶ ἀγγελίην ἀπόφασθε·
> οὐ γὰρ πρὶν πολέμοιο μεδήσομαι αἱματόεντος,
> πρίν γ' υἱὸν Πριάμοιο δαΐφρονος, Ἕκτορα δῖον,
> Μυρμιδόνων ἐπί τε κλισίας καὶ νῆας ἱκέσθαι
> κτείνοντ' Ἀργείους, κατά τε σμῦξαι πυρὶ νῆας

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40 <u>Il</u>. 9. 300-302.
41 Bassett, "The Ἁμαρτία of Achilles," 65.
42 <u>Il</u>. 9. 628-632, 639-642.

ἀμφὶ δέ τοι τῇ ἐμῇ κλισίῃ, καὶ νηῒ μελαίνῃ
Ἕκτορα καὶ μεμαῶτα μάχης σχήσεσθαι ὀΐω.[43]

Bassett has summed up the situation in the following words:

> The choice is now clear to the hero. He must choose between the claims of honor, grossly outraged by an insult unrepaired, and the plea of friends to save them from disaster and perhaps death. He half yields to this plea: he will fight the destroying Hector, *but not yet* -- and when he does, it is too late![44]

As a result of Achilles' refusal to reenter the contest, many of his friends are wounded in battle. News of this comes to the hero from the lips of his friend, Patroclus,[45] when he approaches him with the plea to allow him to go forth dressed in his divine armor, leading the Myrmidons in an attempt to rout the Trojans. In his reply to Patroclus Achilles recognizes that his wrath has gone far; he seems to wish to remedy it, but cannot go back on the words he uttered to the envoys of Agamemnon.

οὐδ' ἄρα πως ἦν
ἀσπερχὲς κεχολῶσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσίν· ἤτοι ἔφην γε
οὐ πρὶν μηνιθμὸν καταπαυσέμεν, ἀλλ' ὁπότ' ἂν δὴ
νῆας ἐμὰς ἀφίκηται ἀϋτή τε πτόλεμός τε.[46]

As a compromise he lets Patroclus don his armor and lead the Myrmidons into battle. Patroclus goes forth, routs the Trojans, but is slain at the hands of man-slaying Hector. When Achilles hears of it, his grief is unbearable, and he admits that he is the cause of it. To his mother, Thetis, when she comes to cheer

43 *ibid.*, 9. 644-655.
44 "The Ἁμαρτία of Achilles," 67-68.
45 *Il.* 16. 23ff.
46 *ibid.*, 16. 60-63.

him, he says: τὸν ἀπώλεσα.[47] Such is the *hamartia* of Achilles--a perfect one according to the canons of Aristotle.

Hector, too, is a type of tragic character, who is good, yet has a *hamartia*. He is the good soldier, fighting for his fatherland, leading on his men to battle.[48] He is the true and devoted husband, portrayed by Homer in a scene whose memory will last forever.[49] But he has his *hamartia*. The prominence that Achilles and his wrath play in the *Iliad* obscures the fault of Hector, and unless we are careful to look for it, we shall miss it. For Homer puts into the mouth of Zeus the words, τεύχεα δ' οὐ κατὰ κόσμον ἀπὸ κρατός τε καὶ ὤμων εἵλεν.[50] His *hamartia* is a fault in honor.[51] After Apollo has stripped from Patroclus the famous armor of Achilles, Hector takes it μέγα κλέος ἔμμεναι αὐτῷ -- thinking less of the objective of battle than of his own glory. As S. E. Bassett sums it up:

> Hector's fault in honor depends little upon the part which Apollo plays in the death of Patroclus, and on his own reputation for courage. It consists in the undue appropriation of glory. There is too much of personal pride in his exultation over Patroclus (π 834ff. -- notice that Achilles at X 379ff. does not take sole credit for slaying Hector), and too much of personal interest in the pursuit of the immortal steeds (π 866).[52]

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47 *ibid.*, 18. 82.
48 *ibid.*, 15, 494-499.
49 *ibid.*, 6. 392ff.
50 *ibid.*, 17. 205ff.
51 cf. S. E. Bassett, "Hector's Fault in Honor," *T. A. P. A.* LIV (1923), 117-127.
52 *ibid.*, 126.

The tragic way in which Homer has drawn the characters of Achilles and Hector is responsible for the tragic tone of the whole poem, so that M. Tait has rightly observed that:

> In so far as the idea of conflict is basic to the main theme of the poem, the scope of the Iliad is tragic rather than epic, and the two figures in whom the elements of conflict are made most explicit, Achilles and Hector, are tragic rather than epic heroes. A comparison of their characterization with that of an obvious epic prototype, Diomedes for example, indicates the extent to which the poet's tragic concept has outrun the epic narrative.[53]

In the Odyssey neither Odysseus,[54] nor Penelope, nor Telemachus are true tragic characters in the Aristotelian sense. Since all their fortunes are changed from bad to good, the perfect μετάβασις mentioned by the Philosopher is lacking in their case. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why Aristotle looked upon the Iliad as a better tragedy. But we must remember that there is a subsidiary plot in the Odyssey. The fortunes of the suitors, which change from good to bad, and thus create the Odyssey's double outcome or ending, are intimately connected

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53 "The Tragic Philosophy of the Iliad," T. A. P. A., LXXIV (1943), 49-50.

54 S. E. Bassett ("The Structural Similarity of Iliad and Odyssey as revealed in the treatment of the hero's fate," C. J. XIV (1918-1919), 557-563) claims that Odysseus commits an act of hybris in the ninth book -- just as Achilles does in the ninth book of the Iliad -- which is responsible for his fate, viz., the journey foretold by Teiresias. This is true, but I do not think that it is part of the main plot as such; it has to do with Odysseus' fate, which is outside the story of the Odyssey. It is, at most, a minor theme in the poem, since the major change in Odysseus' fortunes is from bad to good.

with the main plot. This unhappy ending, together with the trials and sufferings Odysseus undergoes in regaining his status, furnish the tragic character of the *Odyssey*.

In the downfall of the suitors we do find an example of one of the kinds of μετάβασις which Aristotle says is not the perfect tragic plot, but one that can be used: the passing of a thoroughly bad man from good fortune to bad fortune. Such a structure stirs our sense of justice or satisfy our feelings (φιλάνθρωπον ἔχοι ἄν), but it arouses neither pity nor fear.[55] They are the villains of modern drama, and to the critics of mdern drama we will leave the discussion whether they can be tragic characters or not.[56] Aristotle admitted that they were tragic characters of a sort, but not the ideal ones. Whereas he says in the passage just referred to that the *metabasis* of such characters does not excite pity and fear, he admits in another place[57] that it does achieve the tragic effect. The Stagirite gives the example of Sisyphus, who was wise, wicked and unscrupulous, but worsted in the end. Such are the suitors undoubtedly,[58] since

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55 *Poet.* 1453a 1.

56 cf. S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, fourth edition, Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London, 1932, 313; L. Cooper, *Aristotelian Papers*, *Revised and Reprinted*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N. Y., 1939, 131ff. "The Villain as Hero".

57 *Poet.* 1456a 19.

58 cf. W. Allen, ("The Theme of the Suitors in the *Odyssey*," *T. A. P. A.*, LXX (1939), 104-124), who considers the suitors "as tragic heroes of the type described by Aristotle;" apparently he means the ideal type, and yet he immediately adds: "although they certainly do not arouse in us emotions proper to tragedy." (p. 109) "The suitors' tragedy is on a very low plane and was clearly manufactured by Homer for the

from the very beginning of the Odyssey we are introduced to them as performing their deeds of violence

οἵ τέ οἱ αἰεὶ
μῆλ' ἁδινὰ σφάζουσι καὶ εἰλίποδας ἕλικας βοῦς.[59]

Later meetings with them serve only to confirm this first impression. Homer constantly calls them ἀγήνορες.[60] Telemachus addresses them as Μητρὸς ἐμῆς μνηστῆρες ὑπέρβιον ὕβριν ἔχοντες.[61] Homer has, I think, purposely portrayed them as wicked. An acute observation of Eustathius supports this view. σημειοῦνται ἐνταῦθα οἱ παλαιοὶ παρατηροῦντες ὡς οὔτε σπένδοντας οὔτε εὐχομένους θεοῖς Ὅμηρος τοὺς μνηστῆρας ποιεῖ. Ὀδυσσεὺς μέντοι δι' ὅλης τῆς ποιήσεως οὐ τοιοῦτος φαίνεται.[62]

The second qualification for a tragic character is that he should be appropriate (ἁρμόττον), i. e., true to type. Aristotle explains this by saying that there is such a thing as a manly character, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be manly or clever.[63] Let us take Andromache. She is sketched as a faithful and loyal wife, adorned with all the excellences and virtue desirable in a model spouse. Her whole life is absorbed in her home, in Hector, in Astyanax. Her love for her husband,

popular conclusion of the Odyssey." (p. 110) He gives their hamartia as a "lack of sophrosyne". (p. 109) It seems to me that Allen is attempting to get an example of Aristotle's tragic hero out of the suitors, when they are not such.

59 Od. 1. 91-92.
60 Ibid., 1. 106, 144, etc.
61 Ibid., 1. 368.
62 1446, 34 ad II, 300, cited by Adam, 59.
63 Poet. 1454a 22.

Hector, is only surpassed by her pride in him, and her anxiety for his safety. She begs him not to go forth to battle in the field again, but rather to fight from the walls. When he refuses and tells her to return home and busy herself about the loom and distaff, there is no answer, but his dear wife went forthwith to her house, oft turning back for a glance at him, and shedding warm tears.[64] Andromache returns to tend to her child and household tasks,[65] feeding Hector's horses,[66] and even in the end preparing hot water for the bath he will want when he returns.[67] Her lament at the end is that of a truly grief-stricken widow. With the death of Hector half of her life is gone, and even in this hour of sadness her thoughts are centered not so much on herself, but rather on her fatherless child, to whom no honor will ever come.

Almost any of the outstanding characters in either poem will fit Aristotle's prescription that the character should be "true to type". This is really a point of masterful skill in which Homer excels. And beyond this each character has his own little individuating traits. Achilles, a real soldier, is not just a soldier - a _genre_ character; nor is Hector just a Husband. Each is true to his type, but oh so different! I cannot think of any character in the Homeric poems, however true to type he

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64 Il. 6. 495-496
65 _Ibid._, 22. 440ff.
66 _Ibid._, 8. 187-189.
67 _Ibid._, 22. 444.

may be, that does not have some characteristic by which we seem to remember him forever. The ugliness of Thersites,[68] the beauty of Nireus,[69] Dolon, the only son with five sisters,[70] and Briseis, whose only friend is the dead Patroclus,[71] will never be forgotten because of these marvelous pen-strokes.

Aristotle's third qualification for character was that it should be ὅμοιον. There has always been some difficulty in understanding precisely what Aristotle meant by this. A hint may perhaps be given in the language that he uses later in the Poetics.[72] ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες καλλίους γράφουσιν, where ὁμοίους (said of a portrait) means "like the original". Horace understood it to mean that the author should follow the traditional rendering.

> aut famam sequere. . .
> scriptor honoratum si forte reponis Achillem,
> impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
> iura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.[73]

That is, the poet should portray a traditional character according to the traditional concept of him. It will be rather hard to find out whether or not Homer has done this, seeing that we do not have any of the poems of his predecessors. The only hint we have is from the saying of Homer, when he compares the men of his own day with the heroes of his poems, οἷοι νῦν βροτοί εἰσι.[74]

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68 ibid., 2. 216ff.
69 ibid., 2. 673.
70 ibid., 10. 317.
71 ibid., 19. 287ff.
72 1454b 10; cf. Bywater's note ad loc.
73 Ars Poetica, 119-122.
74 Il. 1. 272; 5. 304; 12. 449; 20. 287. Many Homeric characters were undoubtedly subjects of earlier lays.

Lastly, the tragic character must be consistent with himself (ὁμαλός). This is also explained by Aristotle; even if the original be inconsistent and offers a fickle nature to the poet for representation, still he must be consistently inconsistent.[75] To me it seems that this one quality of character-portrayal is predominant in Homer's works. It can certainly be used as a proof of the unity of authorship in the poems. Despite Grote and his followers the character of Achilles in the Iliad is thoroughly consistent, and has been shown to be such by many modern writers.[76] One needs only to reread the brief sketch of Achilles' hamartia as given above to see that this is true.

In the Odyssey Odysseus himself is a perfect example of consistent character-drawing. In the first line we learn about our hero that he is a man of many wiles. This sets his character, and from there on, we see him practising his craft and cunning. His escape from the Cyclops, Polyphemus, from Circe, and his greatest feat - the slaying of the suitors, bear this out quite fully. To impress this trait upon the hearer of the tale Homer has selected for his hero epithets that adequately describe his character.[77]

Our poet has drawn the personages in his poems in a manner which stirred the admiration of Aristotle. Homer's influence

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75 Poet. 1454a 26.
76 e. g., Bassett, Bowra, L. A. Post.
77 e. g., πολύμητις, Od. 4. 763; 5. 214; 7. 240; 8. 463; 9.1; 11. 354; 13. 311; 14. 191; 19. 106; etc. πολυμήχανος, Od. 5. 203; 10. 401; 11. 60; 13. 375; 14. 486; 22. 164; etc.

on Attic tragedy in this regard is not slight. Moreover, his practice may have influenced Aristotle somewhat in forming his notions of the ideal tragic character.[78] Almost all of the points which the Stagirite has prescribed for good tragic characters can be found to be abundantly illustrated in the poems of Homer.

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78 I would not go so far as to say, with D. S. Margoliouth, that all of Aristotle's notions have come primarily from Homer. "Just as Aristotle's theory of Unity, which is based on the Homeric poems, breaks down if applied to the tragedies, so do his rules for character. There are dramas wherein no single character can be described as good; in the Orestes, e. g., they are all (with the exception of quite unimportant persons) atrocious. Hence there can be no appeal in such dramas to that sympathy with suffering virtue which can be aroused in most audiences." (op. cit., 118) I quote his opinion here for the sake of the novelty of it only, since I do not agree with him.

CHAPTER V

TREATMENT OF THOUGHT

When the word "character" is understood in its modern connotation, διάνοια or "thought" forms a part of it, as we saw in the previous chapter. We said that διάνοια is the element that refers to the intellectual side of a man's character. Aristotle tells us that it is contained in those passages ἐν ὅσοις λέγοντες ἀποδεικνύασίν τι ἢ καὶ ἀποφαίνονται γνώμην.[1] It is, as Bywater wells puts it,

> intellectual capacity, as evinced in language (or actions), and seen when the actors argue or make an appeal to the feelings of others, in other words, when they reason or plead with one of the other <u>dramatis personae</u> in the same sort of way, as a rhetor might do.[2]

In the <u>Poetics</u> Aristotle did not go deeply into the examination of this constituent of tragedy, since it belongs expressly to the province of rhetoric, and was treated in his work on that subject.[3] Consequently, the remarks concerning "thought" in the <u>Poetics</u> are quite brief.

It is found in speeches which contain an argument that something is or is not, or a general expression of an opinion.[4]

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1 <u>Poet.</u> 1450a 6.
2 <u>Aristotle on the Art of Poetry</u>, note <u>ad</u> 1450a 6.
3 <u>Poet.</u> 1456a 34.
4 <u>ibid.</u>, 1450b 11.

Under its comprehension come all the effects that are to be produced by language in general. Some are proof and refutation, the arousing of the feelings (such as pity, fear, anger, etc.), exaggeration and depreciation.[5] Though some of these effects are clearly produced without any explanation being needed, others are occasioned only by the speeches of the speaker.[6] It is the ability to say what is possible (τὰ ἐνόντα) and appropriate (τὰ ἁρμόττοντα). It comes in the dialogue and is the function of the statesman's or the rhetorician's art.[7]

Such are the brief remarks that Aristotle makes on the subject of "thought" in the Poetics. They will, however, be convenient pegs upon which to hang some observations. As far as "thought" is concerned, Aristotle was of the opinion that Homer was supreme: πρὸς γὰρ τούτοις λέξει καὶ διανοίᾳ πάντα ὑπερβέβληκεν.[8] Chancellor Throop has likewise remarked:

> The intellectual capacity and the rhetorical ability of the Homeric poems need not be discussed. The poems served as models in these matters to the civilized world for many centuries, and even Cicero and Quintilian bestow the greatest praise on them in this regard.[9]

It must be noted, however, that Aristotle most likely did not mean by "thought" what we do when we speak of the "thought-content" of a poem, e. g., its sublime sentiments and high concepts.

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5 Poet. 1456a 36ff.
6 ibid., 1456b 5-7.
7 ibid., 1450b 4ff.
8 ibid., 1459b 16.
9 op. cit., 27; cf. Quint. X. 1, 46-47; Cicero, Brutus 40.

His meaning is not wholly alien to this interpretation, yet it seems that he is rather emphasizing the types of speeches in which this thought-content is expressed. If we were to take διάνοια as equivalent to "thought-content" in the modern sense, the Homeric poems would be able to offer numerous examples of it. But we are restricting ourselves to what rather seems to be Aristotle's meaning of the word in the Poetics.

The Odyssey, because of the nature of the story, and because several books are wholly occupied in the account of Odysseus' wanderings, is less capable of being used to illustrate Homer's use of διάνοια than the Iliad. It is true that there are many speeches in that poem, but if we stop a moment and consider how many of them are purely narrative in character, the reason for the paucity of examples of "thought" becomes clear. Books nine to twelve are wholly narrative. Then there are the various false accounts of his wanderings which Odysseus tells to conceal his identity, descriptions of gardens, shipbuilding, and such like. The whole Odyssey portrays its action not directly, as does the Iliad, but rather indirectly. "Longinus", we know, attributed the reason for the predominance of narrative in the Odyssey to Homer's old age, whereas the spirited account of the Iliad belongs to the heyday of his genius.[10] As a result, few speeches in the Odyssey will be capable of serving as examples

10 De Sublimitate, 9. 13, ed. by A. O. Prickard, in the O. C. T. series, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1906.

of Homer's use of διάνοια. However, in this poem we do have an instance, the like of which is not to be found in the Iliad. I refer to the assembly called by Telemachus in the beginning of the poem.[11] Here we have a complete set of speeches with arguments for and against Telemachus, who summoned the men to get rid, if possible, of the wooers of his mother. Telemachus states the case: the suitors are devouring his substance. He needs no proof; all know it. He merely appeals to the citizens' sense of justice, and begs the suitors to desist out of shame before their neighbors.[12] In fact, when Antinous rises to answer him, he does not deny the charge, but shifts the blame to Penelope.

> σοὶ δ' οὔ τι μνηστῆρες Ἀχαιῶν αἴτιοί εἰσιν,
> ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ, ἥ τοι πέρι κέρδεα οἶδεν.[13]

Telemachus tells the assembly that he cannot send his mother away from his home, or send her back to her father, Icarius. But the suitors should leave his halls.[14] The seer, Halitherses, rises to the defense of Telemachus, interpreting an omen in his favor.[15] One of the chief suitors, Eurymachus, however, is quick to rebuke Halitherses; he advises Telemachus to send Penelope back to her father, who may give her again in marriage.[16] But Telemachus asks instead that they provide him with a ship

11 Od. 2. 6-259.
12 Ibid., 2. 64ff.
13 Ibid., 2. 87-88.
14 Ibid., 2. 130ff.
15 Ibid., 2. 161ff.
16 Ibid., 2. 194ff.

that he might go to seek for news of Odysseus. His friend, Mentor, rises and rebukes, not the suitors, but the rest of the citizenry for tolerating this plunder of their lord's substance in his absence. Leocrites answers him by saying that even if Odysseus did return, Penelope would never rejoice, as he would be slain by the suitors who outnumber him. Such speeches might well be the fore-runners of speeches in the Athenian assembly to which Aristotle listened in fourth-century Athens. He said that "thought" pertained to the rhetorician's and statesman's art. Here is an assembly of "rhetoricians" and "statesmen" of heroic times, and Homer has handled the passage well.

However, as far as the rest of the poem is concerned, there are few real speeches wherein the speaker "puts forward an argument or delivers an opinion." In this poem Homer charms his listeners as much by his narrative, as in the Iliad he does by portraying his actors actually making use of "oratory".

Aristotle enumerates in the Poetics five types of speeches in which "thought" is predominantly portrayed: 1) demonstrative speeches, i. e., those that prove a point; 2) refutations; 3) emotional pieces, arousing pity, fear, anger, etc.; 4) exaggerating speeches; 5) depreciatory speeches. Homer has examples of each of these types, and of some naturally more than others. Wherever possible, these examples have been taken from the dialogue engaged in by the major characters, Achilles, Hector, Odysseus , who are truest to Aristotle's tragic hero.

"Thought", as portrayed in speeches having τὸ ἀποδεικνύναι as their purpose, can be found in Achilles' speech to Agamemnon, as he proves that the king is acting unjustly.[17] When Nestor tries to make peace between them, he uses an a fortiori argument to prove his point.[18] ἤδη γάρ ποτ' ἐγὼ καὶ ἀρείοσιν ἠέ περ ὑμῖν ἀνδράσιν ὡμίλησα. . . ἀλλὰ πίθεσθε καὶ ὔμμες ἐπεὶ πείθεσθαι ἄμεινον. Sarpedon, in trying to get Hector to rouse his men to battle, pleads his cause by saying that his own men, the Lycians, are fighting hard, and they are only allies; why should not Hector therefore rouse his men to do battle?[19] In the ninth book the Embassy is a scene somewhat like the assembly scene in the beginning of the Odyssey; we see the orators debating before us. Here Odysseus tries to persuade Achilles to return to battle.[20] Phoenix does too.[21] These speeches are both demonstrative, although Phoenix' speech is also capable of being called "emotional". During the night before Achilles returns to battle, Polydamas tries to prove to Hector and the Trojans that they should return to Troy.[22] After the reconciliation of Achilles and Agamemnon Odysseus pleads the case of the Greek host, saying that they should not be led out to battle while fasting.[23] In the Odyssey we can cite the speeches which Odysseus makes in trying to prove his identity to his son, Telemachus, and to his father,

17 Il. 1. 149-171.
18 Ibid., 1. 254-284.
19 ibid., 5. 472-492
20 ibid., 9. 225-306.
21 ibid., 9. 434-605.
22 ibid., 18. 254-283.
23 ibid., 19. 155-183.

Laertes, as examples of this type.[24]

Refutations, too, are found in the Iliad and the Odyssey. Odysseus' rebuke to Thersites and the answer to his charges are an example.[25] A yet better example, however, is Achilles' reply to Odysseus in the Embassy scene.[26] We may likewise recall Hector's speech to Polydamas and the Trojans, refuting the former, and bidding the latter prepare for battle in spite of Polydamas' misgivings.[27] In the Odyssey, Antinous' reply to Telemachus in the Assembly will serve as an instance of refutation.[28]

When we come to consider speeches that have an emotional character, i. e., that tend to arouse pity, fear, anger, etc., many more examples can be found in the poems to illustrate Homer's practice. We think of the laments that are uttered throughout the Iliad. Emotional though these may be, they are not exactly speeches wherein a point is proved or an opinion is expressed, except in a very wide sense. In the quarrel scene Achilles' speech, in which he swears his oath, is rather a perfect example of the kind of speech Aristotle meant.[29] Andromache's appeal to Hector to take pity on her and on Astyanax tries

24 Od., 16. 202-212; 24. 331-344.
25 Il. 2. 246-264.
26 Ibid., 9. 308-429.
27 Ibid., 18. 285-309.
28 Od., 2. 85-128.
29 Il. 1. 225-244.

to persuade Hector that he should rather fight from the walls than return to the field.[30] Hector's reply mingles the feelings of honor, pity and pathos, as he proves to her that he cannot remain.[31] In the Embassy Phoenix's appeal to Achilles, unlike Odysseus', is almost wholly emotional.[32] When the Greeks are hard-pressed, and Agamemnon is thinking of flight, and has even suggested it, Odysseus' reply is full of anger.[33] As Achilles approaches to meet Hector before the walls of Troy, Priam in great fear prays his son to enter the gates and save himself.[34] And finally when Priam himself is in the hut of Achilles, pleading with him to restore Hector's body, he plays on the emotions that tug most at Achilles' heart-strings - his love and devotion to his father, Peleus.[35] In the Odyssey, Telemachus addresses the assembly in a speech that is mainly emotional. In fact, Homer tells us of the effect on the audience.[36] Odysseus, as he meets Nausicaa, pleads for pity only; at first he flatters her to gain her good will, and then asks for mercy - and a cloak.[37]

The speeches of Nestor, the Polonius of Homeric poetry, are full of μέγεθος. He is always illustrating his point from the distant past of his youth.[38] The ruse that Agamemnon uses

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30 ibid., 6. 407-439.
31 Ibid., 6. 441-465.
32 Ibid., 9. 434-605; cf. line 612.
33 Ibid., 14. 83-102.
34 Ibid., 22. 38-76.
35 Ibid., 24. 486-506.
36 Od. 2. 39-79; cf. line 81.
37 Ibid., 6. 149-185.
38 Il. 7. 124; 11. 670-761; 23. 626-650.

to stir up the host to battle is also an example of exaggeration.[39]

Depreciatory speeches in the Iliad are uttered by Hector to his brother, Paris;[40] and by Ajax to Achilles in the Embassy, which finally moves Achilles somewhat.[41] The old warrior shows him that after all he is so small at heart that he loves not his own warrior-friends who are fighting bravely in his absence, though unsuccessfully.

This catalogue of the examples of the various types of speeches shows us that Homer has employed that element of tragedy which Aristotle was later to call διάνοια. According to his brief treatment of the subject in the Poetics Aristotle considered demonstration, refutation, exaggeration, depreciation and emotional appeals as the main ways in which "thought" is expressed in a tragedy. Abundant examples of Homer's practice in this matter have been listed. Unfortunately the inquiry would lead us too far afield if we were to investigate the kinds of demonstration or refutation according to Aristotle's norms in the Rhetoric. We are limited in our discussion here to the Poetics.

A fitting conclusion to this chapter can be made by citing the wise observations of Father Henry Browne, S. J. He says:

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39 ibid., 2. 110-141.
40 ibid., 3. 39-57.
41 ibid., 9. 624-642.

> In dealing with the dramatic character of the poems, we may briefly refer to them as containing the germ and more of the germ of Greek Oratory. In nothing is Homer's power more evident than in the genuine simple eloquence of his speeches, and even of the shorter ones. There is no single branch of Oratory -- pathos, invective, sarcasm, exhortation, entreaty, of which he does not possess the easy mastery.[42]

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42 Handbook of Homeric Study, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1905, 320.

CHAPTER VI

TREATMENT OF EMOTION

When Aristotle proposed his definition of tragedy many centuries ago, he determined that its end or purpose was the catharsis of the emotions. Since then much dispute about the emotions in tragedy has arisen. Although Aristotle indicated the catharsis of the emotions as the end of tragedy, he did not list it among the six elements of tragedy. Yet we could not obtain an adequate idea of Homer's tragic ability, unless we gave some time and consideration to his treatment of the emotions proper to tragedy.

The purpose of tragedy according to Aristotle is δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνειν τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. These are the οἰκεῖαι ἡδοναί of tragedy. Throughout the Poetics Aristotle has given many valuable hints about these emotions, which we shall list briefly.

Pity is aroused for the man who does not deserve his misfortunes, and fear for the man who is like us.[1] Though pity and fear can be produced by spectacular staging,[2] yet they should be occasioned by the plot itself, so that a person could feel

1 Poet. 1453a 4ff.
2 Ibid., 1453b 1.

these emotions without seeing the play dramatized.[3] In the emotional effect of tragedy the two most important elements are parts of the plot: peripety and anagnorisis.[4] This is especially true of an anagnorisis that coincides with a peripety.[5] But pity and fear can likewise be aroused in simple plots.[6] Since this is true, tragedy should not only represent a complete action, but should also contain incidents that cause pity and fear, most of all when the incidents are unexpected, and still logically proceed one from the other.[7]

Aristotle lists in great detail the kinds of incidents that are especially conducive to arousing our feelings. A worthy man passing from good fortune to bad does not arouse fear or pity, but rather shocks our feelings.[8] And the most untragic situation is that of a wicked man passing from bad fortune to good fortune.[9] Satisfying our feelings for poetic justice would be the result of a wicked man passing from good to bad fortune, but this is different from stirring up pity and fear.[10] The ideal situation is that of a good man who is brought to his catastrophe through some <u>hamartia</u>. Actions that cause pity and fear are these: calamities among friends (not enemy to enemy, since there

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3 ibid., 1453b 2ff.
4 <u>ibid</u>., 1450a 33-35.
5 <u>ibid</u>., 1452a 32.
6 <u>ibid</u>., 1456a 19-21.
7 <u>ibid</u>., 1452a 1-4; 1452b 32.
8 <u>ibid</u>., 1452b 35.
9 <u>ibid</u>., 1452b 37.
10 <u>ibid</u>., 1452b 38.

is nothing pitiable here except in so far as the actual calamity is concerned);[11] actions that are performed consciously with a knowledge of the facts (e. g., Medea consciously killing her children);[12] actions that are performed without realizing their horror, only to discover it when it is too late.[13] (Aristotle says this last method is a good one.[14]) Finally there are actions that are intended without realizing the consequences, but discovering them in good time.[15] (This is the best method.[16]) But to intend to perform an action with full knowledge of the consequences and then not perform it is not tragic at all.[17]

Though Aristotle has given what might seem like an adequate description of the emotional aspect of tragedy, it is unfortunately not enough to satisfy most critics. For there is probably no other topic in the Poetics, which is subject to as much discussion as this.

First of all, we must ask ourselves whether the οἰκεῖα ἡδονή of an epic is the same as that of a tragedy, and whether this is the opinion of the Stagirite. S. H. Butcher remarks: "There is nothing in the Poetics to bear out the assumption of many commentators that epic poetry excites precisely the same

11 ibid., 1453b 15ff.
12 ibid., 1453b 28.
13 ibid., 1453b 30.
14 ibid., 1454a 2.
15 ibid., 1453b 34.
16 ibid., 1454a 4.
17 ibid., 1453b 37ff.

emotions as tragedy."[18] If this statement is true, it would seem that the efforts of this present chapter will go for naught. Although the nature of epic poetry may not be precisely the same as tragic poetry, yet it seems that epic poetry can arouse the same emotions, and often does. Aristotle does not deny this, nor does he explicitly affirm it. He tells us that historically epic poetry agreed with tragic only in so far as it was a metrical representation of heroic action. But it is different in as much as it has a single metre and is narrative.[19] The purpose of tragedy is to arouse pity and fear. Epic poetry can excite in the hearer various emotions, among which are often pity and fear. Though it often does stir up other emotions, e.g., wonder or admiration, we cannot deny that epic poetry is capable of arousing pity and fear also. This is sufficient for the purposes of this chapter. If Aristotle thought that Homer's epics were tragic, as he did, then surely he did not deny that epic poetry could arouse those emotions proper to tragedy. Bywater, in his commentary on the Poetics, has written:

> In Aristotle's view epic poetry has the same end as Tragedy; and its immediate effect (ἔργον) is the same in kind, the pleasurable excitement of the emotions of pity and fear. The affinity of the Homeric Epic and Tragedy in this respect was acknowledged in antiquity by the ancient commentators on Homer. . .as well as by Plato (Rep. 605C). Aristotle's view is that the difference between them

18 Some Aspects of the Greek Genius, Macmillan and Co., London, 1891, 356 note.

19 Poet. 1449b 9ff.

> is mainly one of manner; so that apart from that they are fundamentally alike -- with the same literary elements, the same canons of procedure, the same emotional effect, and the same ultimate end and justification.[20]

And so, our task in this chapter is to examine Homer's practice to see how akin it is to Aristotle's prescriptions.

First of all, pity and fear should be aroused by the very plot itself. Epic poetry, since it lacks the spectacular accoutrements that are possible to tragedy because of staging, must necessarily produce pity and fear from the very marrow of the plot if it is to have it at all. While discussing the subject of plot in Homer according to Aristotle's notions, we saw that the three elements of a plot which he says contribute to the emotional effect of tragedy can be found in Homer's poems. They are peripety, anagnorisis and calamity. The tragic plot in the _Iliad_ depends on Achilles' refusal to enter the battle again at the entreaty of his friend, Ajax. Because he does not heed Ajax's advice, but sends forth Patroclus in his stead, Achilles comes to a catastrophe that causes him the greatest grief he has ever known. Aristotle said that we pity the person ἀνάξιον δυστυχοῦντα. Cooper's translation of this phrase, it seems to me, brings out the true meaning that Aristotle had when he wrote these words. "Pity is what we feel at a misfortune that is out of proportion to the faults of a man."[21] We pity Achilles,

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20 _op. cit._, 359; cf. also Gudeman, 388.
21 _Aristotle on the Art of Poetry_, 40.

because he is suffering much more than he really deserved. The twenty-third book of the Iliad, where he mutilates the corpse of Hector gives us a wonderful picture of his grief.

We fear because we realize that the tragic character is like ourselves. Our fear is a conditioned one. Because of the identification of ourselves with the tragic personage we begin to fear for him, and ourselves, realizing that sometime we may be in a like circumstance. Although Achilles may be a Homeric hero, or even appear to us as a demigod, yet his actions show that human nature is still a part of him. It is this element in him that makes us identify ourselves with him in his great suffering, and makes us feel so intensely the emotion of tragic fear. We can well apply S. H. Butcher's description of a tragic hero to Achilles, illustrating how he is ὅμοιος :

> As it is, we arrive at the result that the tragic hero is a man of noble nature, like ourselves in elemental fellings and emotions; idealised, indeed, but with so large a share of our common humanity as to enlist our eager interest and sympathy.[22]

In the remarks of the Scholiasts are found frequent references to Homer's arousing of the tragic emotions. They indicate for us various concrete passages where the poet attempts by language and other means to excite the audience's feelings. L. Adam has remarked:

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22 Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 317.

> Furcht und Mitleid soll also die tragische Handlung erregen. Belege finden sich zahlreich. So Venet. A. I, 21 ἐκφοβεῖ αὐτούς (B.), 26 δυσωπεῖ τοὺς Ἕλληνας (B.), 50 Abs. 2; 580 πρὸς κατάπληξιν τῆς μητρός (B.); VI, 371 ἅμα δὲ καὶ κρίνειν τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἀξιοῖ ὅτῃς ἐπλήρωσε μὲν λύπης εὑρὼν Ἑλένην Ἀνδρομάχην σοῦ, 484 οὐχ ἁπλοῦν τὸ πάθος, ἀλλὰ σύνθετον ἐξ ἐναντίων πάθος, ἡδοναὶ καὶ λῦπαι· εἰς γέλωτα μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν προσήγαγε τὸ βρέφος, εἰς δάκρυον δὲ ἡ περὶ τοῦ Ἕκτορος ἀγωνία (B.), etc.[23]

In the Odyssey, too, the emotions of pity and fear are aroused from the very plot itself. The fortunes of Odysseus and his followers are hardly in proportion to their deeds - "fools, who devoured the kine of Helios Hyperion."[24] In the ninth book Odysseus by his craft and cunning blinds the Cyclops, and exults:

> Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τίς σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
> ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν
> φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι
> υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί' ἔχοντα.[25]

Polyphemus prays to his father, Poseidon, that Odysseus may never reach his home, or at least may he arrive after many wanderings, having lost all his comrades, and carried there on the ship of strangers.[26] This is accomplished, and when he does finally arrive, our emotions are again strained and stirred violently by the battle with the suitors, and again by the long-awaited meeting of Odysseus and Penelope. As we feared for Achilles, so too we fear for Odysseus, although certainly not in the same degree, since Odysseus after his suffering finally comes

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23 op. cit., 33.
24 Od. 1. 8.
25 ibid. 9. 502-505.
26 ibid. 9. 530ff.

to a happy end. In the *Odyssey*, as we have seen, we have an example of anagnorisis coinciding with peripety - a situation which Aristotle thought was especially conducive to producing the effects of pity and fear. Odysseus reveals himself to the suitors, and proceeds to slay them.

Aristotle said that the emotions were aroused even more when the incidents happened unexpectedly, but nevertheless as a consequence of one another. Due to Homer's foreshadowing most of the major events in both poems are known to us beforehand. However, there is the strict causality between the events, which Aristotle prescribed. Our analysis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* given in the chapter on plot will serve to illustrate this. As far as the kinds of incidents are concerned, only the *Iliad* will meet with Aristotle's requirements in this regard. There we have the passage of Achilles, a good and noble character, from good fortune to bad because of his hamartia. This for Aristotle would make the καλλίστη τραγωδία.[27] The *Odyssey*, as he himself has remarked, has a double outcome, which he did not consider so perfect a plot as one with a single outcome, as we have described. It is interesting to note that Aristotle ascribed the reason for this kind of plot to the sentimentality of the audience, to which poets are often wont to cater.[28]

With regard to the actions that arouse pity and fear, we

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27 *Poet.* 1452b 30ff.
28 *ibid.*, 1453a 32ff.

have in the *Iliad* a remarkable example of calamity among friends. The death of Patroclus was caused by Achilles' refusal to reenter the fight; he allows him to go forth to drive the Trojans back, and he is slain. Achilles himself admits that he was the cause, τὸν ἀπώλεσα.[29] This is also an example of an action intended and carried out, whose horror is only learned too late. In the *Odyssey* there is no example of such actions. The calamities that are caused are those of enemy against enemy, Odysseus against Polyphemus, against the suitors; these Aristotle claimed would not arouse pity and fear except in so far as the calamity itself was concerned.

Such are the ways in which Homer has handled the emotional element of tragedy along Aristotelian lines. There is not as much agreement here as there is in some of the other elements of tragedy. In the *Iliad* we find Homer almost, as it were, following Aristotle's rules to the letter. The *Odyssey* is different. Yet in both of these poems there are found the means to arouse true pity and fear. Both of them can be said to be a μίμησις . . . δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. By means of pity and fear they accomplish the *catharsis* of these emotions. Aristotle did not tell us in the *Poetics* precisely how these emotions were to be purified, and so there is no norm by which we can judge of Homer's practice. We know that there is a *catharsis* in Homeric poetry, since we

29 *Il.* 18. 82.

are not conscious in any scene of experiencing the real pity and fear of ordinary life with their depressing elements. Certain scenes in the poems may be described as gory; the mutilation of Hector's body may disgust us. Yet this is epic poetry, and scenes such as these have always been a part of such poetry. Perhaps it was the more refined taste of Fifth Century Athens that excluded them from the stage. But even though the mutilation of Hector's body may be terrible, Homer's language and style have elevated that description, so that we realize that the poet is not dwelling on the details of that action for the sheer delight of painting something gruesome. Rather it is an instance of Homeric realism. Real and detailed pictures though they be, they serve only as a background for those magnificent scenes like the lament of Andromache, Hecuba, and Priam which follow. Had not these latter scenes followed the mutilation of Hector's corpse, the emotions aroused by the description would undoubtedly affect us in a more depressing manner. The very last line of the *Iliad*, ὣς οἵ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο,[30] is a concrete example of how the *catharsis* takes place in that poem. That line recalls to us the terrible death and mutilation, and then those pathetic scenes of Priam in Achilles' hut and of the lamentations, which redeem the horror of Achilles' actions, and so elevate those emotions to the aesthetic level.

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30 *ibid.*, 24. 804.

If Aristotle's prescriptions on the subject of catharsis were only extant - granting that he did treat the subject in the lost second book of the Poetics - we would be in a better position to judge whether or not Homer has made use of a tragic element which the Philosopher was to incorporate in his rules for good tragedy. Any attempts to show how Homer has used catharsis would be founded on what we think Aristotle meant. This is unsatisfying, but under the circumstances we can do no more.

CONCLUSION

Before we add our concluding remarks, this is probably the best place to state the likenesses and the differences between epic and tragic poetry, as Aristotle saw them. Epic, we learn, like tragedy and other forms of poetry and art is a <u>mimesis</u>.[1] In some things it agrees with tragedy, and in some it differs; epic has one metre, is narrative, and is of greater length - these are its chief differences.[2] Because of its length, however, it can represent simultaneous actions.[3] The episodes, too, in epic are long, whereas those of tragedy are shorter.[4] If the incidents in these episodes are relevant, they increase the poem in bulk and richness.[5] Lengthy though it may be, epic should have the same elements as tragedy, save song and staging effects.[6] The plot in the epic should be constructed as in a tragedy, i. e., dramatically.[7] Consequently, there should be the same kinds of plot as there are in tragedy.[8] Epic, too, needs reversals, discoveries, calamity; its thought and diction are also to be good.[9] The plot of the epic poem, however, has

1 Poet. 1447a 13ff.
2. <u>ibid</u>., 1449b 9; cf. 1459b 17ff.
3 <u>ibid</u>., 1459b 26.
4 <u>ibid</u>., 1455b 15ff.
5 <u>ibid</u>., 1459b 26ff.
6 <u>ibid</u>., 1459b 9.
7 <u>ibid</u>., 1459a 18.
8 <u>ibid</u>., 1459b 7.
9 <u>ibid</u>., 1459b 10ff.

less unity than a tragedy, because it admits longer and more frequent episodes.[10] Marvellous actions are admissible in tragedy, while even the inexplicable can be used in an epic.[11] And when the question is raised which is the better type of poetry and mimesis, Aristotle gives the palm to tragedy, since it can fulfill its function without being acted, and accomplishes all that epic poetry can do in a shorter and more concentrated space. It has all the elements of epic poetry, and besides these it possesses a great economy of length, which enables its effect to be more concentrated.[12]

Admitting, then, these differences which Aristotle himself acknowledges, our conclusion is only that which Aristotle had proposed, viz., that the Iliad and the Odyssey do contain the elements of a tragic poem according to his notions of tragedy. Our purpose in this thesis has been to examine these poems to see explicitly how Homer makes use of these elements. In almost each individual instance Homer has been found to have constructed his poems along lines that Aristotle later proposed for the καλλίστη τραγῳδία. We are not trying to say that Greek tragedy of the fifth century was really begun in Homer's time. There were many stages of development between the Iliad and the Odyssey and the first dramatic attempts of Thespis. The lyric poems had intervened to contribute their share to that develop-

10 ibid., 1462b 7ff.
11 ibid., 1460a 11.
12 ibid., 1462a 11ff.

ment; so too the dithyrambs. Nor can we deny all originality to the tragedians themselves. However, we can be fairly safe in saying that Athenian tragedy, as Aristotle conceived it, had its beginnings in Homer's poetry.

Did Aristotle build his theory of Greek tragedy entirely from the Homeric poems? Some think so.[13] That he was influenced by Homer's art and practice, there is no doubt. But to say that he got his theory entirely from these poems, and that it breaks down when applied to the Greek tragedies, seems to be going too far. Aristotle's whole method of approach to any subject which occupied his attention would be against such a theory. Philosopher that he was, he knew that he could not generalize from one or two instances. Actually he had the _corpus_ of Greek tragedy before him, whence he drew his principles. Because Homer's method and practice accorded so well with these notions, he could not help but notice them. Gudeman has well remarked: "Diese Vorstellung erklaert es auch, warum A. ristoteles so oft ohne Bédenken in der Eroerterung der Tragoedie sich homerischer Beispiele bedient."[14] Aristotle, indeed, looked on Homer as a supreme poet (μάλιστα ποιητὴς Ὅμηρος ἦν),[15] and as the forerunner of tragedy (ὥσπερ Ἰλιὰς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγῳδίας).[16] His reasons are clear enough, when we

13 _e. g._, D. S. Margoliouth, _op. cit._
14 _op. cit._, 109.
15 _Poet._ 1448b 34.
16 _ibid._, 1448b 38ff.

see how Homer actually made use of the very elements that Aristotle later demanded for the perfect tragedy.

From another aspect, too, we can view Homer's influence on Greek tragedy. The extant plays constantly reveal "Homeric touches". We have even mentioned the statement that is attributed to Aeschylus, that his dramas were slices from Homer's banquets. Aeschylus' plays, more than those of the other tragedians, reveal this influence. "Rightly or wrongly the ancient critics regarded the 'Iliad' as a model of artistic construction, and the technique of the later Greek poets only becomes intelligible when we understand the method of the first and greatest source of their inspiration."[17] By investigating the Iliad and the Odyssey as we have done according to the canons of Aristotelian criticism, we have tried to bring out in a little different manner than usual the very abundant riches of this "greatest source" of inspiration for later Greek poets. The few elements that were treated in this thesis do not adequately cover the field of influence that Homer had on later poets. Let me cite a statement that will show how he exerted this influence in other points as well.

> Homer's technique, the shape and structure of his paragraphs, his balancing of themes and episodes, like figures on a vase or pediment, even the distribution of his images -- similes of fire and flood, for instance, sparsely used at first, but

17 J. T. Sheppard, The Pattern of the Iliad, London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1922, 211.

> afterwards reiterated, reinforced, combined, accumulated, till the images become reality, the Trojan rivers are in spate and fire devours the plain -- all this was studied and adapted to dramatic purposes by Aeschylus. Whether he said it or not, his plays were slices from the Master's feast.[18]

Such details were outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless the influence of Homer in these points is unmistakeable. In omitting mention of them, I have not denied them. The similarities which Aristotle noted in Homer and Athenian tragedy were only the concrete expressions of the elements that are the same in each. These we have tried to bring out more explicitly, thus vindicating Homer's title of First Tragedian.

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18 J. T. Sheppard, "Attic Drama in the Fifth Century," The Cambridge Ancient History, edited by J. B. Bury, S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, Cambridge, at the University Press, 1927, V (Athens), 114.

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